

BRITISH DOMINION IN INDIA AND AFTER

BY

V. B. KULKARNI



1964

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHOWPATTY : BOMBAY-7

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First Edition, August 1964

Price Rs. 20/-, Sh. 35/-, \$ 9/-
Rupee Price (outside India) Rs. 23/-

PDF created by Rajesh Arya - Gujarat

PRINTED IN INDIA

**BY V. D. LIMAYT AT THE INDIA PRINTING WORKS, 9, BAKELIHOUSE LANE,
FORT, BOMBAY-1, AND PUBLISHED BY S. RAMAKRISHNAN, EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY, BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, CHOWPATTY, BOMBAY-7**

FOREWORD

THIS book makes a careful assessment of British rule in India. It draws attention to how, despite her vast resources and martial traditions, the country became a victim of foreign domination mainly on account of the imbecility of her rulers and their incapacity for concerted action. With the honourable exception of a few, the majority of them were self-seekers or adventurers who had neither the knowledge nor the vision to understand the problems that faced them. Naturally, therefore, a trading corporation, belonging to a country some twenty times smaller than India, easily acquired unchallenged mastery over her.

Shri Kulkarni has spoken some home truths about the outbreak of 1857. There is much force in the author's argument that the foundations of Indian nationalism were laid by men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

In the three chapters dealing with the obstacles in the way of the country's independence, Shri Kulkarni has given a cogent and closely-reasoned account of the reactionary role played by the civil and armed services, the Princely Order and the forces of communalism. His discussion of the politics of the Muslim League, its separatist ambitions and the eventual partition of India, with all its tragic consequences, is both illuminating and comprehensive.

However, Shri Kulkarni has correctly assessed the role of the former rulers of the country. He writes:

"A politically distracted India was rescued from the throes of civil disorder and was given a strong and stable government whose writ became unchallenged throughout the length and breadth of the country. Despite its vastness, India ceased to have distant points, with the introduction of quick modes of travel and communication. Movement and correspondence became incredibly easier, cheaper and quicker, all of which were an inestimable asset to the growth of national awakening."

Calling attention to the role played by the British in widening the mental horizon of the Indian intelligentsia and in bringing

them together, the author pays a warm tribute to British rule for introducing into this country the concept of equality before the law for the first time. He further writes: "Indeed, the country is deeply indebted to Britain for its system of administration, its laws and regulations, its educational system and, what is equally important, for its ability to admire and to adhere to democratic principles and institutions." The tribute is both whole-hearted and generous.

Students of recent and contemporary developments in India will find ample material in this book which deals with a wide variety of subjects. Religion, politics, economics, education, social reform and many other topics, portraying the life of the Indian people, find their due place in it. The author's appreciation of the role played by the Congress in the country's struggle for freedom and in promoting internal stability after independence is both fair and well-founded.

The first few years of national freedom were indeed marked by epoch-making activities. The drastic revision of the political map of India by integrating the numerous Princely States without provoking any conflict constitutes the most conspicuous achievement of free India. It was little short of a revolution.

The adoption of a democratic constitution and its introduction in January 1950 marks yet another landmark in the contemporary history of this country. The establishment of parliamentary institutions and of adult franchise is evidence of the Founding Fathers' abiding faith in the essential wisdom of the common man. The author has rightly drawn attention to this fact when discussing the three general elections held in the country since independence.

The readjustment of the country's administrative units, largely on the basis of language and the inauguration of an era of planning are discussed at length. His view that the Government should have set up linguistic States in good time ignores that by and large the Indian opinion as a whole was against such linguistic divisions.

There is a separate chapter on planning. While appreciating the achievements of the government in ushering India into the realm of modern industrial economy, the author points out that neither the message of planning nor its benefits have yet reached the common man. The poverty of the people also is still appal-

ling. The author attributes this deplorable fact to defective planning and urges that the executive officers responsible for carrying out the various Plan projects should be men of sound education and ability and of unimpeachable integrity. Such men, he rightly argues, cannot be found in required numbers unless the whole basis of the present system of education is suitably revised to turn out honest, conscientious and efficient officers.

Shri Kulkarni's plea for the growth of a sound party system in the country will be widely endorsed. In fact, many of India's political ills are directly traceable to the absence of such a system. The country has rightly opted for a parliamentary system of government and it is imperative that there should be well-organised political parties, with firm faith in democratic principles, in order to ensure its success. There is an urgent need for the growth of a rival party to the Congress, with the necessary capacity to take over the responsibilities of government.

Shri Kulkarni's comments on India's foreign policy are well-informed. He is of the view that there is no need for the country to abandon its policy of non-alignment, but urges that it should exercise considerable restraint when ventilating its views on international affairs, especially when they relate to controversial issues. His plea for a bold and realistic reappraisal of India's attitude towards Pakistan on Kashmir and on the future of the minorities in that country deserves serious consideration. The book, which makes a critical review of Nehru's leadership as Prime Minister, ends with an eloquent tribute to him.

Written as it is in a lucid and engaging style, the book, I am sure, will be useful both to the experts and the students and make interesting reading for the general readers.

BOMBAY:

August 15, 1964

K. M. MUNSHI

P R E F A C E

THE aim of this book is two-fold. It seeks to make a dispassionate survey of British rule in India and to assess the country's achievements since independence. In the long and chequered history of India, Britain's association with this country was, in point of time, little more than transitory and yet the monuments of her rule will endure. Britain, which gained political dominion in India through the instrumentality of a trading corporation, could not in the nature of things become an ideal ruler. Political supremacy and economic exploitation remained the bedrock of her Indian policy, from which she never deviated at any time.

Even so, India is under a deep debt of gratitude to Britain for helping her to discover herself and for giving her parliamentary institutions which, besides providing for the government of the people, by the people, for the people, uphold the liberty of the individual and thus the dignity of man. The gift is indeed priceless. It is precisely because India is so close to the Western democracies in her political institutions and in her way of thinking that the United States, Britain and other like-minded countries rushed to her assistance when China launched a treacherous attack on her in October 1962.

The second part of the book makes a critical analysis of the manner in which the rulers of free India have set about their duties and responsibilities. A good deal of plain-speaking is necessary if we are not to delude ourselves with the belief that all is well with our affairs. India has all the makings of a Great Power and it is the task of our statesmen to ensure that she really becomes one.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. K. M. Munshi for contributing a Foreword to this book.

My thanks are also due to Shri V. A. E. Rasquinha for his enthusiastic help.

V. B. KULKARNI

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1. EUROPEANS COME TO INDIA

INDIA'S earliest contacts with the outside world date back to many centuries before Christ. The fame of her great civilization and of her abounding wealth had travelled to distant lands, stimulating both their admiration and spirit of adventure. Several centuries before Alexander embarked upon his epoch-making military campaigns as the missionary of Hellas, India had established cordial relations with his country. An ardent disciple of Aristotle, the Macedonian conqueror came to India in 326 B.C., not entirely from a desire to win greater military renown, but to understand the depth and excellence of Hindu thought and culture. He was amply rewarded in his quest and took back to the West "a flood of new facts" concerning the Eastern countries, "which is only equalled by those later additions to knowledge which Europe owes to the Crusades".¹ The political consequences of his Eastern expeditions were negligible, but they were most fruitful in shortening the cultural distance that had long separated Asia from the European countries. Indeed, as another authority has pointed out, "the notions of Indian philosophy and religion which filtered into the Roman empire flowed through the channels opened by Alexander".²

It was India's notable experience that she rarely lived in isolation for long stretches of time. In the closing years of the fourth century B.C., Megasthenes came to this country as the ambassador of Seleukos Nikator at the court of Chandragupta Maurya, a contemporary of Alexander, and wrote a perceptive account of both India and the Mauryan capital, Pataliputra. There was a regular stream of foreign travellers in the period between A.D. 400 and 700 and the inflow was significant both for its size and its usefulness as a source of history. We are profoundly grateful to the Chinese pilgrims for their pious and indefatigable labours on behalf of India, the holy land of

¹ *A History of Europe*, H. A. L. Fisher, Edward Arnold, 1957, p. 42.

² *Oxford History of India*, 1958, p. 91.

Buddhism. Pre-eminent among them was Hieun Tsang who came to this country long after the visit of Fa-hsian in A.D. 399-414. A man of deep piety and of vast learning, Hieun Tsang made an extensive tour of the country from A.D. 630 to 644 and collected a vast mass of Buddhist literature, besides extending the frontiers of his own knowledge through discussion and study. He was cordially welcomed by King Harsha, himself a distinguished man of letters, and was acclaimed as Master of Law by universal consent. The great pilgrim was later followed by another Chinese, I-tsing, who, along with more than sixty others, has left behind a useful record of his Indian impressions. The famous Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, visited the flourishing Pandyan town of Kayal on the Tamraparni twice, in 1288 and 1293, and described it as a great and noble city. He bestowed high praise on the reigning monarch, not only for his magnificence, but also for his liberality to merchants and foreigners so that they were happy to visit his realm in South India.

The Indians were no less persevering in their foreign travels. Emperor Asoka, who proclaimed and practised with tireless energy the paramountcy of universal love and brotherhood and who inscribed his message of peace on granite for the benefit of posterity, sent scholars and missionaries to distant lands to popularize the gentle and humane philosophy of Buddha. Undertaken in the middle of the third century B.C., theirs was a wide-ranging mission which took them as far as the Hellenistic Kingdoms in Asia and Africa, and perhaps in Europe. Central Asia, China and the South-East Asian countries also came within the scope of their ministrations.

The Indians were indeed a daring and enterprising people, whose energies overflowed their national frontiers. They not only endured the hazards and hardships of the journey by land, but braved the perils of the seas, charting them with precision for safe navigation. The Indian Ocean held no terrors to their mariners who sailed their ships to the far-off coasts of Africa and South-East Asia. "It should be remembered," says K. M. Panikkar, "that the Indian Ocean, including the entire coast of Africa, had been explored centuries ago by Indian navigators. Indian ships frequented the East African ports and certainly knew Madagascar. Whether they had rounded the Cape and

sailed up the West coast is not known with any certainty".³ At no time in her long and chequered history did India dream of an overseas empire for self-aggrandizement, but she earnestly strove to stimulate world interest in her civilization and in the products of her industry. Hegel, quoted by Panikkar, rightly says: "India as a land of Desire formed an essential element in general history. From the most ancient times downwards, all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to the treasures of this land of marvels, the most costly which the earth presents, treasures of nature—pearls, diamonds, perfumes, rose essences, lions, elephants, etc.—as also treasures of wisdom. The way by which these treasures have passed to the West has at all times been a matter of world historical importance bound up with the fate of nations." The indebtedness of the Asian countries to India has been acknowledged to be even more profound. "From Persia to the Chinese Sea," writes Sylvain Lévi, "from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and to hold her place amongst the great nations, summarizing and symbolising the spirit of humanity."⁴

No apology is necessary for this lengthy quotation since it so vividly portrays India's contribution to the diffusion of knowledge and enlightenment and to the closer integration of the Asian peoples. Efforts on a much bigger scale through the enterprise of a number of countries were, however, necessary in order to enable man to gain a closer and more intimate understanding of the vastness, the variety and the splendour of the world, both on land and sea, as a prelude to his emancipation from his subservience to nature that had lasted for a million years. The horizons of the European of the earlier Middle Ages, for example, were not spacious since, with the Mediterranean as the immemorial pivot of his continent, he was condemned to function in a closed circle. The fetters on the intellectual and

³ *Asia and Western Dominance*, K. M. Panikkar, George Allen & Unwin, 1959, p. 28.

⁴ *The Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru, Signet Press, 1946, pp. 239-40.

inventive abilities of man could be effectively broken by bringing the four continents closer together, which could be best accomplished by conquering the seas. Europe took the lead in this historic undertaking and reaped astounding rewards, as it still does, from its daring and pioneering labours.

The necessities of commerce forced Europe to break its isolation. During the first three centuries of the Christian era, a large and lucrative trade, both overland and maritime, was maintained between India and the Roman Empire which greatly prized the Indian fabrics and the spices of the East. In the succeeding centuries, the stream of Asian traffic continued to flow towards the West with more or less regularity, but, with the Arab conquest of Egypt and Iran in the seventh century, direct communication between India and Europe ceased. The seizure of the unconquered city of Constantinople by the formidable Turk in May 1453, in fulfilment of his great political ambition, caused a further setback to the direct commercial relations between Asia and Europe. Goods were taken to the Persian Gulf, from where they were carried overland to Aleppo and other ports in the Levant. Those sent by the Red Sea were transported across Egypt to Alexandria. From these two entrepôts, Europe received its supplies of Asian articles through the agency of Venice and Genoa. Lying beyond the desolating range of the Middle Eastern political convulsions, these Italian cities handled an enormous volume of profitable business and rose into splendid prominence, exciting the envy of many European countries.

Such a disposition was, however, unsatisfactory to Europe. With the rapid growth of civilization, the demand for the so-called luxuries of the rich increased enormously in the West. The much-prized commodities of the East were spices, silks, cotton fabrics and precious stones. The aristocracy of Rome, in the plenitude of its imperial glory, prided on clothing itself with the superb piecegoods of India. The spices, for the possession of which nations in Europe were willing to fight one another to the finish, became an article of necessity and were used in meat, wine and pastry to increase their taste. The Italian monopolists did not scruple to exploit the situation created by the expanding and clamant demand for these commodities and were heartily detested for their avarice. The dis-

covery of America by Columbus and of the sea route to India by Vasco da Gama was, therefore, prompted by an inexorable commercial necessity. "First attempted," writes Tawney, "as a counterpoise to the Italian monopolist, then pressed home with ever greater eagerness to turn the flank of the Turk, as his strangle-hold on the eastern commerce tightened, the Discoveries were neither a happy accident nor the fruit of the disinterested curiosity of science. They were the climax of almost a century of patient economic effort. They were as practical in their motive as the steam-engine."⁵

By a perverse freak of history, the impetus to the great discoveries came from the Iberian peninsula, one of the most backward areas of Europe. But, whatever views we may hold about the past and the present colonial policy of Portugal and about her morbid obsession with religion, it is impossible to withhold our admiration from her for the heroic adventures of her sons on the high seas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. That was indeed a golden age for Portugal when her genius shone resplendently in many aspects of her national life.

The father of this great movement was Henry the Navigator. He was a man of vast resources and a wide-ranging vision. Elevation of his country to the position of a great Power by annexing the fabulous trade of the East became the governing passion of this remarkable man. He set about his goal with the zeal of a missionary. At Sagres, he gathered around him a team of gifted men, consisting of mathematicians, geographers, astronomers and traders, and engaged the services of the celebrated cosmographer of the time, the Catalan Jewish Jafuda Cresques, who, after his conversion, came to be known as Jaime Ribes. Prince Henry also established an observatory and a school of navigation at the same place, Sagres, where these scientific men made valuable charts and improved the working of the compass. Though he himself never went on any naval expeditions, he laboured ceaselessly for forty years in promoting knowledge for mastering the mysteries and the perils of the ocean. He was convinced that it was possible to sail round Africa to India and thus trade directly with the East.

Though Prince Henry did not live to realise his dreams, his

⁵ *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, R. H. Tawney, John Murray, 1929, p. 69.

great project bore fruit eventually. The later voyages, worked out by experts, including the cosmographer Martin Behaim of Nuremberg, led to a number of important discoveries. In 1485, Portuguese vessels sailed to the mouth of the Congo, while the intrepid Bartholomew Dias made history by rounding the Cape of Good Hope in 1487. Perhaps of equal daring, but far more eventful, was the achievement of Vasco da Gama, a gentleman of King Emmanuel's household, who anchored off the coast of Cochin on the west coast of India on May 20, 1498. It was a glorious era for Portugal, whose sovereign dignified himself with the title of "Lord of the Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, and India." This sonorous title was confirmed by a Bull of Pope Alexander VI in 1502. At the climax of her maritime power in the middle of the sixteenth century, Portugal's dominion in the East extended from Guardafui to Ceylon, from Peru to China and embraced all territories on the east coast of Africa.⁶

For Portugal, her heroic age was also an era of unprecedented material prosperity and of literary and cultural renaissance. With her swift-moving and efficient caravels, which were by far the best armada then sailing, and with brave and indomitable sailors to navigate and defend them, Portugal rapidly rose to a pre-eminent position in Asia, claiming to hold the "gorgeous East in fee". Lisbon became Europe's foremost entrepôt and handled an immense volume of trade which brought "swarms of ships and traders" from all over that continent. The ships came to take away the muslins of Bengal, the brocades of Gujarat, the 'calicoes' of Calicut, the spices of the Spice Islands, the pepper of the Malabar coast, and the teas and silks of China. Portugal and its capital grew rapidly in wealth and prosperity, while their ruler became the richest sovereign in Europe.⁷

In that glittering period, Portugal produced many great writers and one of the "most supremely gifted poets the world has ever seen," Luis de Camoens. The son of a captain in the Portuguese navy, Camoens remained in Asia for sixteen years and wrote the famous epic, *Lusiads*, immortalising Vasco da Gama's first voyage to India and his return. To the educated

⁶ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, Cambridge University Press, 1929, p. 17.

⁷ *Portugal*, H. Morse Stephens, T. Fisher Unwin, 1891, p. 237.

Portuguese, Camoens is more than what Dante is to the Italians, Goethe to the Germans, Shakespeare to the English, or Kalidasa to the lovers of Sanskrit literature. Gil Vicente, Bernardim Ribeiro, Sa de Miranda and Ferreira were among the shining lights in the domain of poetry. In an age of exploits, history naturally formed an important subject for study and the writings of Joao de Barros, the official historian, receive the same weighty consideration from his countrymen as those of Livy. The grammarian, Manuel Alvares, the mathematical genius, Pedro Nunes, the distinguished antiquary, Andrea de Resende, and theologians like Francisco Ferrario and Jeronymo de Azambuja, the learned Hebrew scholar, who wrote a commentary on the Bible, have all won a place in the kingdom of letters. Portugal also provided Europe with technicians and organisers, practical scientists and master mariners. And yet in the full tide of her glory, she unwittingly nursed a fatal malady which eventually brought about her downfall. The slave trade, introduced by Henry the Navigator, and the homicidal fires of the Inquisition kindled in the country in 1536, played no small part in reducing the mighty Portuguese empire to dust and ashes.

When the Portuguese first came to India, conditions were most favourable for them to gain a firm foothold in the country and to promote profitable commercial and friendly relations between the East and the West. The great Vijayanagar Empire, which extended almost to the whole of the southern peninsula, was in the plenitude of its power and glory. Founded in 1336, the Empire had come into existence to serve as a bastion against the aggressions of the bigoted despots from the north and to preserve the immemorial pieties, the culture and the learning of the land by striving for a juster political and social order. India welcomed Islam as a great faith and did not share Portugal's inveterate hatred for that religion and its adherents, but she deeply detested the excesses committed in its name. Sadists and specialists in rapine and vandalism, who proclaimed that to plant the flaming sword of Islam in the heart of India, was the highest act of piety, could certainly claim no respect in a land famous for its tolerance and fellow-feeling.

Embracing Islam with neophyte intensity, the Turkish invaders of India prescribed a political and religious arrangement in the country, the essential injustice and iniquity of which could

not be wholly removed even by the most enlightened Muslim rulers. Religious intolerance and racism were the bedrock of their policy. The *forte* of the Turk, says Dr. Habibullah, was the sword and in all the tasks that he undertook, he brought to bear upon them "a boundless energy, an all-pervading racialism and the fierce orthodoxy of a neo-convert." And yet with a complete disregard for consistency, the Turk was grossly materialistic.⁸ The policy of intolerance led to the propagation of strange and absurd doctrines. While Ala-ud-din Khalji asserted that non-Muslims in the country could claim no rights, Firuz Shah declared with admirable finality that India was a *Musalman* country!⁹ Giving a formidable catalogue of the humiliating disabilities that were imposed upon the Hindus, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the eminent historian of the Moghuls, says: "If their existence was tolerated, it was only to use them as hewers of wood and drawers of water, as tax-payers, *Khiraj-Quzar*, for the benefit of the dominant sect of the faithful." Under such a dispensation, the goodness of individual rulers, like Sher Shah and Akbar, both of whom came later, was like a mere palliative to a prolonged and painful malady.^{9a}

It is small wonder, therefore, that the Bahamani kings, who held sway in the Deccan and against whose fanatical excesses the Vijayanagar Empire had ranged itself, were men of desperate wickedness, most of whom had sunk to the lowest depths of animalism, infamy and vice. Between 1347 and 1518 the throne of the Bahamani kingdom was occupied by fourteen sultans and with the exception of one man, all were "bloodthirsty fanatics". It would be difficult, says the *Oxford History of India*, to specify any definite benefit conferred upon India by the dynasty. Its record was indeed one of "wholesale devastation" wrought by its "wars, massacres and burnings". The five Muslim states that rose on its ashes were certainly less sanguinary, but the iniquity of a religious minority imposing its unbridled will upon

⁸ *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, Dr. A. B. M. Habibullah, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1945, p. 2.

⁹ *The History and Culture of the Indian People: The Delhi Sultanate*, Vol. VI, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960, p. 104.

^{9a} The champions of triumphant Islam adopted no better policy in Europe, where Christians under Muslim rule, to quote Fisher, were "excluded from political power, made subject to a special tax, and were on more than one occasion exposed to the risk of systematic extermination" (*A History of Europe*, p. 726).

a vast majority of the population persisted. Challenge to Muslim rule, in spite of the enlightenment and benevolence of some of its monarchs, was thus inherent in the situation.

It is a fact of supreme historical importance that the animosity between Vijayanagar and the neighbouring Muslim kingdoms and its friendly attitude towards the Portuguese greatly helped the latter to hold their own in the country. The superior firing power of the Portuguese artillery and their ability to supply horses from Ormuz were of much value to the Hindu empire in frustrating the aggressive designs of its neighbours. We thus find that, although in their earlier clashes with the Zamorin of Calicut, the Portuguese were invariably defeated, thus effectively scotching their ambition to gain the sovereignty of India, their affairs in the country were on the whole prosperous.

Affonso Albuquerque, the conqueror of Goa, was a sagacious man who realised the value of friendship with Vijayanagar. He sent a Franciscan friar, Frei Luis, on a mission to the capital of the Hindu empire with an assurance that the horses of Ormuz would be supplied only to its Government and "shall not go to the King of the Deccan who is a Moor and his enemy." Albuquerque's name stands high in the pantheon of Portuguese imperialists. He destroyed a Muslim fleet at Ormuz and captured that strategic place in 1507. Three years later, on February 17, 1510, he made another important acquisition by occupying Goa. He was temporarily expelled from that port town, but regained its possession on November 25 of the same year. When he died in 1515, he had the satisfaction of knowing that his country had attained a paramount position in the East. Ships trading between Ormuz and Malacca eagerly sought the protection of the Portuguese "navicerts", while princes and potentates vied with one another in bowing before the new star on the Eastern firmament. Gold flowed into the capital of the Empire in a torrent. An eye-witness records that "he often saw, at the India House (*Casa da India*), merchants coming with sacks full of gold and silver to pay what they owed", but they were often told to come some other day since there was no time to count what they had brought!¹⁰

And yet the golden age of Portugal disappeared like a dream within one century of her rise. A small country, with a popula-

¹⁰ *Portugal*, Dr. J. B. Trend, Ernest Benn, 1957, pp. 145-46.

tion of about one million, it was impossible for it to exercise effective control over its far-flung empire in the East and the West for an indefinite period. The strain upon its slender manpower resources was aggravated by the heavy casualties during the voyages and it has been recorded that, on an average, less than 60 per cent of the men who left Portugal reached India. Such an alarming decimation of her population and the ever-increasing calls upon her to supply troops and administrators to her overseas possessions caused a serious dislocation in Portugal's national economy. The farmer abandoned his plough and the artisan his craft so that the country grew increasingly bankrupt in its productive capacity, thus necessitating the import of foodgrains and other essentials at an enormous cost. Famines and deaths from starvation became more frequent and the gold that poured into the country, far from offering any alleviation, only served as a cruel mockery in the circumstances of widespread hunger and wretchedness. In 1608, an observer lamented that all the "wealth from the conquests in India, which brought to Lisbon parrots in golden cages, gave us no fields in which to sow or to pasture cattle, or labourers to cultivate fields. On the contrary, it took away those who might have served us in this". India, he declared, was in reality a dazzling hallucination. The slave-tended economy added to the helplessness and the misery of the people.

Perhaps, the most forbidding feature of Portugal's colonial policy was her total indifference to considerations of humanity and honour. There was a complete slump in the physical and moral standards of her sons abroad. Many men, including the biographer of Francis Xavier and the Abbe Raynal, deplored the degeneration of this once fine race. It could not be otherwise, because the Portuguese had been taught to regard the countries and peoples outside Europe as objects fit only for exploitation. Declaring that no common rights of navigation existed outside European waters, Barros, the official historian of Portugal, said: "The Moors and gentiles are outside the law of Jesus Christ, which is the true law everyone has to keep under pain of damnation to eternal fire. If then the soul could be so condemned, what right has the body to the privileges of our

laws? ”¹¹ Similar assertions that conquered peoples had no rights were, as we shall show later, also made by the imperialists of other countries.

Proud, arrogant and impatient, the Portuguese abroad did not possess either the skill, or the persuasive abilities indispensable for successful commerce. In fact, their trading methods were atrocious and were scarcely distinguishable from bare-faced robbery. Honesty and fair dealings were almost unknown to them so that they were both distrusted and hated by all who had anything to do with them. It is a measure of their imprudence and deceitfulness that in India they made no bones about biting the very hand that fed them. The great Vijayanagar Empire had been the mainstay of their stability in southern India. After its dissolution in 1565 every consideration of prudence demanded that they should behave with the utmost circumspection. But they were total strangers to such statesmanship. “Throughout the whole of their dealings,” writes Robert Sewell, “with the Portuguese, I find not a single instance where the Hindu Kings broke faith with the intruders, but as much cannot, I fear, be said on the other side. The Europeans seemed to think that they had a divine right to the pillage, robbery, and massacre of the natives of India. Not to mince matters, their whole record is one of a series of atrocities.”¹²

The Portuguese responded to Indian hospitality by setting up the abominable institution of Inquisition at Goa in 1560. They had secured the right of establishing it in their own country in 1536. Their King had fought for it with Rome for twenty years with such persistence that the Pope felt constrained to describe the pressure as Satanic. Symbolising a complete negation of justice and tolerance, the Inquisition was used with remorseless thoroughness in hounding out talented men, including the resourceful and versatile Jews, from Portugal, thus denuding the country of creative abilities. In India, the message of Christ, as preached by the Portuguese, failed to impress many—a fact which forced no less a person than Francis Xavier to leave for Japan. Xavier, who had arrived in Goa in 1542, observed that “to ask people to become Christians was like asking them to

¹¹ *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India*, R. S. Whiteway, Archibald Constable, 1899, p. 21

¹² *A Forgotten Empire (Vijayanagar)*, Robert Sewell, G. Allen and Unwin, 1924, p. 177.

submit to death".¹³ The Inquisition that came into existence in Goa in 1560 was evidently intended to overcome this "stubbornness" and the barbaric figure sculptured on the Viceroy's arch in the colony proclaimed for ever the total unfitness of intolerant men to propagate the doctrine of love and brotherhood.

It is impossible to believe that the Portuguese contributed anything good to India, apart from bringing her into closer relationship with Europe. It is true that the first book published in this country was by the Jesuits at Cochin in 1570, but the Portuguese also brought with them tobacco and an all-consuming intolerance which was directed as much against their own co-religionists, the Nestorian Christians of Malabar, as against others. Albuquerque, who combined in himself the rare qualities of soldier, statesman and scholar, was also a sadist. His flaming hatred for Muslims and their wholesale massacre in Goa and elsewhere will always rank him with such pitiless conquerors as Timur and Nadir Shah. The destruction of Hindu temples by his countrymen and their wanton attacks on defenceless towns and villages on the west coast have left an indelible stain on the pages of Portuguese Indian history. "Intolerance," says Will Durant, the famous American writer, "came with Islam and Christianity; the Moslems proposed to buy Paradise with the blood of the 'infidels', and the Portuguese, when they captured Goa, introduced the Inquisition into India."¹⁴

Portugal received a shattering blow to her military power by her foolhardy adventure in Morocco in 1579. Led by a demented man called D. Sebastian, the flower of her army was destroyed in an engagement near the walled town of Alcazar Quibir. Her very existence as an independent sovereign State was extinguished, with her annexation by Spain in 1580—an eclipse from which she did not emerge till 1640. Portugal was pitilessly exploited by her neighbour, whose colonial policies and religious outlook were equally obnoxious. Professor Tawney describes the downfall of these countries thus: "Portugal and Spain held the keys of the treasure-house of East and West. But it was neither Portugal, with her tiny population, and her empire

¹³ *Modern India and the West*, edited by L. S. S. O'Malley, Oxford, 1941, p. 50.

¹⁴ *The Story of Civilization: Our Oriental Heritage*, Will Durant, Simon and Schuster, 1942, p. 524.

that was little more than a line of forts and factories 10,000 miles long, nor Spain, for centuries an army on the march and now staggering beneath the responsibilities of her vast and scattered empire, devout to fanaticism, and with an incapacity for economic affairs which seemed almost inspired, who reaped the material harvests of the empires into which they had stepped, the one by patient toil, the other by luck. Gathering spoils which they could not retain, and amassing wealth which slipped through their fingers, they were little more than the political agents of minds more astute and characters better versed in the arts of peace.”¹⁵

The new Powers that successfully challenged the “economic imperialism” of Spain and Portugal were Holland and England. Both were Protestant countries and both categorically rejected the Papal disposition dividing the world between the Kings of Spain and Portugal, the royal gendarmes of Catholicism. With the great discoveries, the old overland trade route to Asia, some 7,500 miles long, had ceased to attract the maritime countries of Europe. The improvements in the seacraft, the advent of new techniques of warfare, and the growing power of organised finance, were steadily but surely changing the face of the world and the fate of man. The desperate attempts of Rome, which had a vested interest in desiring the continued hegemony of the Iberian peninsula in world affairs, and of Philip II of Spain, described as a “melancholy, conscience-stricken, dimly-lit autocrat”, to preserve the *status quo* were, therefore, useless. The defeat of the powerful Spanish armada by the English in 1588 proved conclusively that the Spanish colossus had indeed feet of clay. Spain was no less vulnerable economically since she was destitute of both science and manufactures. By reason of her penury, she was often unable to “perform the most elementary tasks of government”.

In contrast, Holland, despite her political subjection to the Spaniard, rode on the crest of prosperity. Dutch seamanship and spirit of adventure were first-class. Besides, the Hollanders had developed hardihood and perseverance as a national trait by successfully struggling against the ocean and the river. Their capacity for efficient management, their enterprising spirit, their republican simplicity, their total freedom from religious bigotry,

¹⁵ *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, R. H. Tawney, p. 72.

and their inflexible determination to take a big share in the growing commerce of the world marked them out for the role of a Great Power. The goods brought into Seville and Lisbon from America and the East were carried north in Dutch ships. The discoveries and the impetus given by them to international trade brought to Antwerp an economic pre-eminence almost unique in European history. This great city, now in Belgium, reigned supreme in the world of commerce till its fall in 1585. Philip's foolish action in closing the port of Lisbon to the Dutch ships in 1594 gave a great fillip to their overseas adventures which won for them both prosperity and an empire. "Holland," says Sir William Hunter, "turned her despairing land-revolt into a triumphant oceanic war." So swift and overwhelming were her victories and territorial gains abroad that they caused the greatest alarm to her proud enemy, Spain, who offered to grant her independence in 1607 in return for her withdrawal from India! Holland refused, but two years later she agreed to a twelve years' truce.

The foundation of Holland's supremacy in the East was laid in 1602 when a charter was granted to the Dutch United East India Company to trade with the Asian countries. The Company, believed to have opened a new phase in Dutch capitalism, was much bigger in resources than its English rival that had come into existence in 1600. It began to function under favourable auspices since its fortunes were controlled by the powerful merchant-princes of Amsterdam. Its initial subscribed funds were £540,000 as against an investment of £60,000 by its English rival. It was given a monopoly of all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of the Straits of Magellan, "with certain sovereign rights, such as those of making treaties with native rulers and enlisting troops, though these had to swear loyalty to the States-General".¹⁶

The rewards from the new commercial enterprise were both ample and quick in coming. In 1606, the Company paid a dividend of 50 per cent and three years later the percentage rose to 325. Holland's golden harvest came mostly from Indonesia since spices were prized in Europe like precious stones! It became her firm policy, as it had been that of Portugal, to

¹⁶ *Holland*, J. A. Veraart, Macdonald & Co., 1945, p 41.

exclude all European traders from Eastern commerce. The simple fact that the world is large and that its bounties are so enormous that the entire mankind can share them equitably, was acceptable to no European Power either then or in later centuries. It is small wonder, therefore, that the Dutch, who had served in the Portuguese ships and learnt from them the sea route to the East, pitilessly expelled them from the region. They captured Amboyna from the enemy in 1605 and gradually supplanted them from the Spice Islands. Goa was blockaded in 1639, while Malacca was seized in 1641. In 1638, they gained a firm foothold in the rich island of Ceylon and succeeded in throwing out the Portuguese from that country by 1658.

The retribution that overtook the Portuguese in the East was thus swift and overwhelming. In India, she retained Goa, Diu and Daman,—shadowy remnants of her former possessions in the “gorgeous East”—entirely because she was allowed to do so, first, by the British Indian Government and later by the Government of free India, till they were absorbed into the country’s wider unity in December 1961.

The rise of Holland in the East was gall and wormwood to the English. They had heartily assisted their potential but far more formidable foe in raining blows on the Portuguese and now found themselves drawn into an unequal combat with their former allies. Like those of the Dutch, their interests in the East centred on the Spice Islands and so they spared no efforts to entrench themselves there. But it was impossible for them to prevail against their new adversaries whose military and merchant navies were far more powerful than their own. Besides, the Dutch Company was backed by a powerful burgher aristocracy which exercised a decisive influence on the political and commercial policy of its country. Outstanding among the great cities of Holland,—Rotterdam, Delft, Dordrecht, Leyden and The Hague—was Amsterdam, which became the capital of the European money market. Here, in this city, as in a few others in the country, there grew up a new class of financial experts who succeeded in evolving techniques of money transactions strikingly similar, in all essentials, to those of the present day. Established in 1609, the Bank of Amsterdam was, “at the time, an institution unique in the world, with its immense deposits

and a credit so unrivalled that its notes, accepted as international tender, always bore a premium".¹⁷

The modestly-equipped merchants of London battled in vain against such powerfully-backed antagonists. Jan Pieterzoon Koen, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies in 1615, spoke for his countrymen when he said: "Were they (the English) masters, the Dutch would quickly be out of the Indies, but praise be to the Lord, who has provided otherwise. They are an unendurable nation." The contrast between such Dutch assertions and the lamentations of the English is noteworthy. Their State Papers of this time record incessant complaints against the "intolerable injuries, cruelty, insolency, and cunning circumventing projects" of the Dutch. The massacre of Amboyna in February 1623 was the culmination of such recriminations and rivalries between the representatives of the two countries. Twelve of the eighteen Englishmen seized in this place were executed,—an act of high-handedness and ferocity that only deepened the animosity between the two nations. The atrocity put an end to English ambitions in Indonesia.

Holland's destiny in India was, however, less durable and glittering, though here too she was for some considerable time ahead of her English rivals in her commercial organisation. She opened factories at Masulipatam and Petapoli on the Golkonda coast in 1604-05 and at Pulicat, north of Madras, in 1609. After its acquisition from the Portuguese in 1659, Negapatam became the chief Dutch trading centre in India. The restless Hollanders went on increasing the volume of their Indian trade, consisting mostly of textiles, and opened more and more depots and factories in the country. In 1620 and in the subsequent years, factories were opened at Surat, Broach, Cambay, Ahmedabad, Agra and Burhanpur. By far the wealthiest and the most prosperous city in the whole of India, Surat, on the west coast, attracted the Dutch like a galvanic needle and gave them large profits. In Eastern India, Chinsura, Kasimbazar and Patna became active centres of Dutch commerce, with Balasore providing good anchorage for their ships. On the coast of Malabar or Kerala, known as the pepper country, they secured between 1661 and 1663 valuable trading concessions by expelling the Portuguese from Quilon, Kranganur, Cochin and Cannanore.

¹⁷ *Holland*, J. A. Veraart, p. 45.

In India, as in Indonesia and elsewhere, the Dutch were pertinacious in employing all means, fair and questionable, in securing their own ascendancy. In 1604, they signed a treaty with the Zamorin of Calicut with the object, among others, of expelling the Portuguese "from the territory of His Highness and the rest of India". Though they were eminently successful in giving *coup de grace* to the waning fortunes of the Portuguese in the East, their astuteness and manoeuvres were of little avail in advancing their interests in India. The Moghul government, the Muslim sultanates in the Deccan and the rapidly waxing power of the Marathas made it impossible for the Dutch to entertain any vaulting ambitions in this country. This, combined with the fact that the ill-defended Indonesia was of inestimable value at the time, finally persuaded the Hollanders to give their undivided attention to South-East Asia and to find their "imperial destiny" in that remote but rich region. Thus, by a process of elimination, a good fairy led the English by the hand from their remote island and placed them right in the centre of the habitable globe. The mainland of India became almost the sole centre of their activities and of their hopes and aspirations in the East, the French being their only remaining European opponents.

The advent of the Danes to India was not of material importance to this country. Their trading company, established in 1616, founded a factory at Tranquebar on the east coast four years later. Their principal settlement was at Serampore near Calcutta and it remained for long an important missionary centre for the dissemination of Western education. The Danes wound up their commercial affairs in this country by selling their factories to the British government in 1845.

2. THE STATE OF THE COUNTRY

THE people of England deeply loved and admired Queen Elizabeth who, they felt, was a great woman, "proud, mettlesome and preternaturally wise", but they did not approve of her cautious policy in the matter of establishing direct trade relations with the East. As the sovereign of a predominantly Protestant country, she was under no obligation to honour the decrees of Rome, parcelling out the world outside Europe between the Kings of Spain and Portugal, but the influence of the Pope, especially when it was backed by Spain's big battalions, was still considerable. None of these considerations, however, weighed much with the mercantile, the military and the seafaring sections of the English community who regarded it as an unpardonable folly on the part of their country not to participate in the growing commerce of the world in deference to the directives of a religious head whose spiritual authority they had long ceased to accept. Nor were they much impressed with the armed strength of Spain, especially on the sea where it had already received a shattering blow in 1588.

Defiance of the Spanish and Portuguese monopoly in the East and in the new world had in fact become necessary following the failure of attempts to discover a northern passage to the famed Spice Islands in the East Indies. The assertion of Master Robert Thorne of Bristol in 1527 that there was no land "uninhabitable or sea unnavigable" was not wholly boastful since attempts to reach the East through a northern passage led to some useful discoveries and the extension of the prevailing geographical knowledge. But the main aim of finding out an alternative sea route to the East Indies was frustrated by the ice and snow of the Arctic regions. In these circumstances, the Queen's cold and non-committal attitude was irritatingly at variance with the growing commercial aspirations of her people. "Military and seafaring men all over England," wrote Camden, "fretted and desired war with Spain. But the Queen shut her ears against them."

The impatience of the English with their sovereign's "un-heroic" policy was well justified. England at this time had become the first naval power in the world and "had the best ship-wrights, the best ships, the best sailors".¹ In addition, she had "learnt the lesson of naval gunnery and the value of the broadside". Her ships were smaller, but they had greater manoeuvrability and could sail closer to the wind. Their superiority was conclusively proved by the decisive defeat of the Spanish armada. The exploits of John Hawkins, of his cousin, Francis Drake, and of many other English sailors on the high seas had proved beyond a shadow of doubt that seafaring formed the very texture and tapestry of England's national life. In 1579, Drake performed a memorable naval feat by circumnavigating the world. In the course of his long and perilous voyage, he visited the Moluccas or Spice Islands by the south-western route and is claimed to have entered into treaty relations with the chief of Ternate. The adventures and the lawless activities abroad of the English mariners, who became famous in history as the "sea dogs", were warmly applauded by their sovereign and countrymen alike. Drake, in particular, became a national hero and a legendary figure and was affectionately called the "master thief of the unknown world".

In the following year, 1580, Elizabeth braced herself to declare to the Spanish ambassador that "the ocean was free to all, for as much as neither nature nor regard of public use do permit the exclusive possession thereof". It, however, required another two decades for giving effect to this bold assertion. Momentous happenings on the high seas and the growing pressure of her subjects at last forced her to defer to their wishes. On September 24, 1599, a body of merchants formally started an enterprise with a modest subscribed capital of a little over £30,000. Failing to obtain the Queen's permission then, they met again exactly a year later and renewed their application by doubling the original subscription. Their pertinacity, combined with the failure of the peace negotiations between England and Spain, bore the desired results. On the last day of A.D. 1600 a royal charter permitted the East India Company to come into existence under the name of "the Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading in the East Indies".

¹ *A History of Europe*, H. A. L. Fisher, 1936, p. 601.

The primary aim of the Company was to secure for itself a share in the thriving spice trade. English meat was not very inviting unless it was generously seasoned with spices, but their prices often rose to prohibitive levels by the time they reached the home market. In the year 1599, when the London merchants were vainly pleading for a trading charter, the Dutch, who were the chief middlemen of this rewarding commerce, had raised the price of pepper from three shillings to eight shillings a pound. It is small wonder, therefore, that the first two voyages of the Company's ships were directed towards the fabulous Spice Islands, the maiden venture of 1601 resulting in their bringing one million pounds of pepper to England. The pacific intentions of the London merchants and their hope of plying a flourishing trade with the East without molestation by their rivals were at variance not only with the prevailing maritime policies of England's enemies, but also with the temper of their own seafaring compatriots. Governed by no international law, the ocean, across which the commerce of the East and the new world flowed, offered unlimited scope for buccaneering. The Englishman of the time, we are exultantly assured, "was not usually slow to dip his hand in a hornet's nest if there was anything to be got out of it. Spices were a more compelling reason; it was the spices that made the big profits and India was not yet thought of as a market where spices could be bought or English goods sold".²

The first Englishman to set foot on Indian soil was Thomas Stephens. He was the son of a prominent London merchant but had become a clergyman in order to propagate the message of Christ in the East. He set sail to India from Lisbon on April 4, 1579, and reached Goa in the following October. He was a man of keen perception and his letters to his father and brother, portraying the state of the country and the scope for English commerce, reveal an acute and observant mind. One of his letters to his father has been printed in Hakluyt's *Collection of Voyages*. His first-hand accounts not only helped to widen the understanding of the English concerning this country, but also aroused their greater interest in it. Father Stephens has won an honoured place in the kingdom of Indian letters

² *The Men Who Ruled India: The Founders*, Philip Woodruff, Jonathan Cape, 1953, p. 21.

by acquiring mastery over Kannada and Marathi, to both of whose literature he made a useful contribution. His great work in Marathi, *Christian Purana*, published in 1615, is an enduring monument to the literary and pious labours of this remarkable man who has rightly been classed with the leading poets of Marathi renaissance.

England's early commercial relations with India were beset with hardships, humiliations and disasters. The Portuguese were still powerful and stoutly asserted their so-called prescriptive and proprietary rights over the Eastern trade and enforced their untenable claim through intrigue and violence. Emperor Akbar was endowed with a catholic and inquisitive mind and he freely sought the good offices of the learned men of all faiths to enlighten him on the excellence of their respective religions. The Jesuit fathers from Goa exercised great influence at the imperial court, which they were not loath to employ for advancing the worldly interests of their Portuguese countrymen. They enjoyed this privilege for some time even after Akbar's death. The English adventurers were, however, not deterred by the ascendancy of their rivals in this country. In 1599, a London merchant called Mildenhall set out on his travel to India by land and did not reach Agra till 1603. The object of his arduous journey was to obtain from the Great Moghul a *firman* authorising the English merchants to trade in his dominion. Mildenhall is claimed to have succeeded in his mission. "After waiting three years," says a writer, "and defeating the machinations of Jesuits and two Italian merchants, he was satisfied with his success, and returned to England." ³

Men of greater determination and ruthlessness were, however, required to run the Portuguese blockade and to overcome Moghul indifference to foreign commercial missions. William Hawkins was the man who could undertake both these tasks with much success. He came to Surat in August 1608 on board *Hector*, the first ship to fly the English flag off the coast of India. Hawkins encountered much opposition and hostility from the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Governor of Surat, but, ignoring his persecutors, he proceeded to Agra, where he arrived at the end of May 1609. He delivered to Emperor Jahangir

³ *The English in Western India*, Philip Anderson, Smith, Elder, 1856, p. 11.

King James I's letter addressed to Akbar who had, however, died in October 1605. He was well received by the capricious monarch who not only took him into his service but also awarded him a Christian damsel with whom the English adventurer was united in holy wedlock! Hawkins, who sailed for Europe in January 1612 with his newly-acquired wife, accomplished nothing worthwhile during his long sojourn in this country. Notwithstanding his claims to the contrary, his mission was a failure.

Batches of Englishmen continued to come to India both by land and sea. In 1610, Henry Middleton left England with four ships, one of them, *Peppercorn*, being commanded by Downton. Despite opposition from his European rivals, Middleton succeeded in landing his men at Surat. He was, however, unable to promote cordial relations with the Governor of Cambay and in desperation became a pirate and for some time pillaged such Indian vessels as fell in his way. Captain Best, who commanded the *Dragon* and *Hosiander*, was more successful. He reached Surat in October 1612 and, in a fierce engagement, fought at the mouth of the river Tapti, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Portuguese. From that day, the prestige of the English rose high, for by their victory they proved to the Moghul government that after all the so-called invincible Portuguese were no match for the newcomers from the West. "In vain," writes Philip Anderson, "did they (the Portuguese) afterwards endeavour to undermine by intrigue the influence which was built upon conduct and bravery. Englishmen had left an impression which was never to be effaced."

Henceforward Surat became the chief commercial centre of the English Company and the corner-stone of the British empire in India. The factory in the city was called the "English House" and was put in charge of Kerridge who was among the principal factors left behind by Captain Best in 1613. The efforts of the English pioneers to gain commercial concessions in this country did not, however, greatly impress the Moghul government, which due to its obsessions with prestige and protocol, did not consider it worthy of its dignity to deal with mere merchant adventurers. It, therefore, became necessary for the King of England to send an ambassador to India to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Moghuls on terms of equality. Such a

distinction fell on Sir Thomas Roe who arrived in Surat in September 1615. Roe's transactions in India till February 1618, his triumphs and his disappointments and, what is equally important, his impressions of the country and its people, combined with the shrewd and penetrating observations of his chaplain, Edward Terry, are of inestimable value to the history of the times.

What, then, was the state of India when the English first came to this country as traders and later found themselves wielding the sceptre of the sub-continent? They did not acquire Indian sovereignty either in a fit of absent-mindedness or by deliberately striving for their "imperial destiny". Their ascendancy in India was entirely due to the monumental folly of her rulers, Moghul, Maratha and Sikh, as the following pages will show.

The English factors and their European rivals established their settlements on the Indian coast during the heyday of the Moghul Empire. With the solitary exception of Akbar, the Moghuls, beginning with Babar, the founder, and ending with Aurangzeb, the destroyer of the Empire, lived and functioned in India like foreigners, using the resources of the country for their own glorification and self-aggrandizement. It is true that the imperial sway of the Moghuls, from 1526 to 1707, constitutes a memorable and glittering chapter in this country's history, but, however valuable its contribution to the cultural and intellectual life of the people, it was singularly sterile in promoting concord and a community of interests between the principal elements of the population. Injustice to the majority of the people was inherent in the very system of government, which was both theocratic and alien in its outlook and policies.

Babar, descendant of the great conquerors, Timur and Chengiz Khan, both described as the "scourge of Asia", shared the ambitions as well as the abilities of his celebrated ancestors. He showed his brilliance and daring as a soldier by defeating the large and powerful armies of the Lodi King of Delhi in April 1526 and repeated this great performance in the following year against a more formidable adversary, Maharana Sangram Singh of Mewar. But the successful adventurer from Central Asia, who was also a shrewd observer and a distinguished man of letters, had no affection for India and could not conquer the powerful nostalgia which he felt for his little principality of

Farghana. On his premature death in December 1530, his place was taken by Humayun, his able but pleasure-loving son, who was dislodged from the throne and chased out of the country in 1540 by another determined adventurer, Sher Shah. The new Emperor was an Afghan of humble origin, but so great was his wisdom as a ruler that he has been acclaimed by the *Cambridge History of India* as "the greatest of the Muslim rulers of India". After his death in May 1545, the country was recovered by Humayun, but his second government lasted barely seven months.

Akbar, who was born at Umarkot in Sind on November 23, 1542, in the bosom of poverty, inherited the throne of Humayun on his death in January 1556. The new ruler was a Titan among men, whose wisdom and versatility and whose benevolence and broad humanity won for him the affection and esteem of his people as the most sincere and gifted of all the incarnations of enlightened despotism. He was probably the only Muslim monarch of India who, in spite of his foreign origin, realised with the force of a conviction that the best interests of the country lay in promoting a genuine and lasting concord between Hindus and Muslims. Besides abolishing the hateful *jaziya* or poll tax on the Hindus, he gave responsible positions in his government to the members of this community.

Nevertheless, the Moghul administration remained basically foreign. The number of imported Muslims was large even in the departments created by Akbar. Most of the dignitaries were Persians, Afghans and other foreigners who, according to Moreland, comprised 70 per cent of the officer cadre, the balance being shared by Indian Muslims and others. The portion of the Hindus was indeed negligible and the majority of the handful of positions awarded to them were held by the Rajputs. Even in the last days of the Empire, the men that surrounded the sovereign were mostly foreigners. The founder of the Asaf Jah dynasty of Hyderabad, known to history as Nizam-ul-Mulk, was the son of a Central Asian who had arrived in India in the twelfth year of Aurangzeb's reign. Another pillar of the Empire was Saadat Khan, the Nawab Vazier of Oudh, who was a native of Mesopotamia. Under such a dispensation, the nationals of India, both Hindus and Muslims, suffered grievously. The Hindus who, in addition, were denied religious toleration, had, of course, the worst of both worlds.

Such was the polity that obtained in India and the fact that its iniquity was deep-rooted was proved beyond doubt by the inability of no less a person than Akbar to mend it. The system grew progressively worse under his successors. His son, Jahangir, who came to the throne in November 1605, was a man of great culture and charm, but he was afflicted with an inordinate fondness for drink which estranged him almost completely from the responsibilities of his office, so that the government of the country came under the control of his beautiful but domineering wife, Nurjahan. To the infirmity of indolence, Jahangir sometimes added bestial cruelty and bigotry.

It was with this man who, besides being inaccessible, was as elusive as a sinuous eel, that the English had to deal in order to secure permission to trade in his dominions. Though courteously received and well-treated, Sir Thomas Roe found it extremely difficult to do any serious business with the monarch whose only consistency, as a writer observes, was a profound lack of interest in commerce. Giving a report of his Indian mission to Sir Thomas Smythe, Governor of the Company, Roe complained: "My employment is nothing but vexation and trouble, and little honour and less profit." He realised the impossibility of concluding anything in the nature of a commercial treaty in India, since such a transaction was entirely alien to the political system of the Moghuls. "There can be no dealing with this King," declared Terry, "upon very sure terms, for he will say and unsay, promise and deny." Nevertheless, by his pertinacity, Roe succeeded in persuading the Moghul to write to King James concerning the English trade mission to his country. The letter, dated February 1618 and translated in Roe's own hand, said that "all the merchants of the English" were welcome to trade in India "as the subjects of my friend" and that they were free to do so wherever they chose and in whatever goods they desired. He promised protection to them from the Portuguese and other hostile competitors. Finally, he hoped that King James would order his men to bring "all sorts of rarities and rich goods fit for my palace".⁴

Roe, who came to India in September 1615 and left the country in February 1618, had ample opportunities to study the strength and the weakness of the Moghul government. Recording his im-

⁴ *English Factories in India: 1618-21*, Vol. I, p. 23.

pressions, which have justly become famous, he says: "His (the Moghul's) greatness substantially is not in itself, but in the weakness of his neighbours, whom like an overgrown pike he feeds on as fry. Pride, pleasure and riches are their best description. Honesty and truth, discipline, civility, they have none or very little." Roe also noticed, as others had done before, that the Moghul government was land-locked and that it was totally deficient in sea-power. Even the great Akbar tacitly acknowledged Portuguese supremacy over the Indian coast by "taking out licences for ships sent by him to the Red Sea, and the Moghuls made no attempt either to free or to command the waters".⁵ Evidently, the emigrants from Central Asia did not have much use for gunboats to protect the Indian coasts from foreign conquerors. Instead, they put up a multitude of gibbets and guillotines to destroy their opponents inside the country! Roe was, however, a wise man and did not exaggerate Moghul weakness. He admonished his countrymen not to imitate the folly of the Portuguese. He wrote: "A war and traffic are incompatible. It is the beggaring of the Portuguese, notwithstanding his many rich residences and territories, that he keeps soldiers that spend it. He never profited by the Indies since he defended them."

The economic and military enfeeblement of Moghul India grew with the succession of Shah Jahan and his son and resulted in the mortal collapse of the Empire after them. Shah Jahan, who succeeded Jahangir in October 1627, was a man of ruthless temperament who gave a sanguinary demonstration of the truthfulness of the Timurid saying that kingship knew no kinship! The throne was his supreme goal and in order to sit securely on it, he ordered the execution of all his male collateral relatives. But this thorough man who, as Roe observed, never smiled and who looked down upon all with contempt, made the capital error of sparing his sons—an act of misguided generosity, so alien to his nature, which cost him his throne and freedom! He found in his son, Aurangzeb, the World Compeller, a more accomplished practitioner of perfidy and ruthlessness.

Shah Jahan was, however, a great lover of art and architecture and caused the construction of some of the most magnificent buildings in the country. Built for eleven years at a cost of

⁵ *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, W. H. Moreland, Macmillan, 1923, p. 9.

more than nine crores of rupees, Taj Mahal is an architectural ornament of unsurpassed beauty. The lovely Moti Masjid, also at Agra, is another tribute to the refined and artistic tastes of the Emperor. The peacock throne and the mass of jewellery that was crammed in the imperial vaults attest to his passionate attachment to beautiful and glittering objects. It was not only art and architecture, but also drawing and painting which attained the highest point during his government. Good progress was also made in literature, but much of the writing in Persian was historical. No literary output of the Moghul period could, however, compare with Tulsidas' immortal work, *Ram-charitmanas*, written during Akbar's reign.

In spite of the unusual cultural activity that marked Shah Jahan's reign, India was being steadily stripped of her resources. It became the primary function of the administration to cater to the pleasures and the costly caprices of the monarch and the aristocracy that kept his company. In the Red Fort at Delhi, the Kremlin of India, the trees and shrubs were nourished with milk, while fountains of rose ran perennially spreading their aroma far and wide. More than in the reign of his father and grandfather, "all considerable expenditure was designed for the glory of the sovereign or his chief courtiers". In Delhi, wrote François Bernier, "there is no middle state. A man must either be of the highest rank or live miserably". In his letter to Colbert, this observant Frenchman, who was court physician towards the beginning of Aurangzeb's reign, noted that the Great Moghul was foreign both by descent and habits. Consequently, he found himself in a hostile country, "or nearly so", which compelled him to maintain a ruinously large army. Besides, the Moghul adroitly fomented "jealousy and discord amongst the Rajas", so that they might fight bitterly amongst themselves and thus insure the permanence of foreign rule. It was difficult for the Emperor, says Bernier, to secure the services of well-bred, competent and honest men. Instead of such officers, "he is surrounded by slaves, ignorant and brutal; by parasites raised from the dregs of society; strangers to loyalty and patriotism; full of insufferable pride, and destitute of courage, or honour, and of decency".⁶

⁶ *Travels in the Moghul Empire*, A.D. 1656-1688, Oxford, 1914, pp. 208, 209, 230, 252.

The decay of the steadily putrefying body politic of India became even more pronounced during the long and suicidal government of Aurangzeb who forcibly seized the throne by displacing his father in 1658 and by destroying his brothers and their sons with primeval ferocity. The cruelty practised by him on his elder brother, Dara, the heir to the throne, by first disgracing him in public and then handing him over to pitiless assassins, and the diabolical manner in which he condemned Dara's young and handsome son to slow death, provide the most melancholy examples of man's inhumanity to man. Aurangzeb was a gifted man and was perhaps the ablest among the Timurids in India, but he was ambitious, cold-blooded, bigoted, suspicious and treacherous. Under a just dispensation, any one of these infirmities would have disqualified him for sovereignty.

The Portuguese empire was shipwrecked on the rock of fanaticism. For the same crime, the Moghul Empire met its end in the hills and valleys of Maharashtra in the Deccan. Emperor Aurangzeb died on February 21, 1707, a disillusioned man, failing till the end to understand why he had been brought into the world. After him, a series of nominal sovereigns sat on the throne of Delhi till it was toppled over by the British. The record of the Moghuls was certainly not sterile, nor was it conspicuously sanguinary, but their government remained alien in all its essential features. The people figured least in the thoughts of the rulers, most of whom regarded self-indulgence as the *summum bonum* of their existence. Dr. Tara Chand points out that, apart from the "contacts which grew between peoples as a consequence of living together in the same land", no efforts were made by the Government to foster a sense of oneness among them.⁷

Such an iniquitous and soulless system deserved replacement and this mighty task was performed mostly by the Marathas under the inspiring leadership of Shivaji. Many great men have suffered grievously at the hands of ill-informed and hostile writers in spite of their enduring contribution to history. Rome never accepted the fact that Hannibal was its most resourceful and formidable foe. Many European and British writers have refused to concede that Napoleon was a man of versatile genius.

⁷ *History of the Freedom Movement*, Tara Chand, Vol. I, Publications Division, Government of India, 1961, pp. 4, 5.

No historian, Muslim or British, has ventured to dismiss Shivaji as a minor actor on the stage of Indian drama, but only a few among them have recognised the fact that by defeating the Moghuls and thus paving the way for Maratha hegemony, he successfully exploded the myth of Muslim invincibility—a figment of imagination that had for centuries paralysed Hindu manhood—and thus created a common ground for the two communities to meet on terms of equality. It would have been impossible to stimulate a common sentiment among the Indian people as a whole unless the sword wielded by the Muslim was wrested from his hand and unless he was taught the futility of playing the role of conqueror. The supreme feat of transforming the conqueror into a collaborator was performed by the doughty highlanders of the Deccan more than by any other section of the Indian population.

In his appreciation of the Maratha leader, Orme observes that his life was simple, that his manners were “void of insolence or ostentation” and that, as a sovereign, he was “most humane and solicitous for the well-being of his people”. Grant Duff is critical of some of the episodes in Shivaji’s life without much basis for his strictures. He, however, views the Maratha hero’s “talents with admiration and his genius with wonder” and records that Shivaji “raised the despised Hindus to sovereignty, and brought about their own accomplishment when the hand that framed them was low in the dust”.⁸ Mountstuart Elphinstone, whose knowledge of Maratha affairs was unrivalled, wrote that it required the genius of Shivaji to avail himself of the mistakes of Aurangzeb “by kindling a zeal for religion and, through that, a national spirit among the Marathas. It was by these feelings that his government was upheld after it passed into feebler hands, and was kept together, in spite of numerous internal disorders, until it had established its supremacy over the greater part of India”.⁹

The validity of this tribute was tested soon after Shivaji’s untimely death in 1680 at the age of fifty. His son, Sambhaji, was an Arthurian figure, courageous and competent, but he was afflicted with hasty temper and impetuosity. He failed to realise

⁸ *A History of the Mahrattas*, Vol I, pp. 239-240.

⁹ *The History of India*, Mountstuart Elphinstone, John Murray, 1874, p. 647.

the need for caution when Aurangzeb descended upon the Deccan in 1681 with the intention of destroying the Maratha Kingdom. He was caught with his family by the Moghul forces during one of his drinking revelries and was executed on March 11, 1689. The Emperor's wanton act of cruelty to the son of a great man roused the anger of the Maratha people who vowed to fight the pitiless invader to the bitter end. Under the leadership of Rajaram, Shivaji's second son, and, after his death, under that of his widow, the celebrated Tarabai, the humble hillmen of Maharashtra waged the war against the imperialists with unexampled pertinacity and heroism. At the time of Aurangzeb's death in 1707 at Ahmednagar, the powerful Moghul army, consisting of renowned fighting men recruited from all parts of India and from many Asian and European countries, was, after a war for twenty-six years in the Deccan, beaten into a feeble and derelict instrument. Along with it, the proud empire of the Timurids was reduced to dust and ashes.

The stage was thus set for the Marathas to embark upon the bold project of winning the sovereignty of the country. Peshwa Bajirao I, described by Sarkar as a heaven-born cavalry leader, achieved considerable success in that direction, but his sudden death in the full tide of his manhood was a great loss to the Maratha cause. In the days of his son and successor, Balaji Bajirao, the Deccan Power attained the summit of its military glory, with fully one hundred thousand Maratha horse "slaking their thirst in every stream that flowed between Cape Comorin and the Himalayas".¹⁰ The disaster of Panipat in 1761 certainly shook the Maratha Empire, but the recovery of both the government and the people under the guidance of the talented Peshwa Madhavrao was remarkable. The youngman was a civil and military genius and, to quote Temple again, he is "for ever to be revered as a model prince, the *flos regum*, and as one of the finest characters that the Hindu nationality has ever produced". His career was cut short in the prime of life; he was barely twenty-seven years old when he died of a wasting disease. Paying a high tribute to the first four Peshwas, Temple says: "None of the many lines of Hindu sovereigns in India has ever shown a series of sovereigns equal to the Peshwas. The historical student will immediately inquire whether four sovereigns equal to

¹⁰ *Oriental Experiences*, Sir Richard Temple, John Murray, 1883, p. 392.

them can be found in any of the Mahammodan dynasties of India.”¹¹

The period covered by the lustrum of these remarkable rulers was less than sixty years, while the Moghuls from Akbar to Aurangzeb held sway for nearly 150 years. It is useless to speculate on the possible and the contingent, but there is good reason to believe that the history of India would have been different if the brilliant Peshwas had been vouchsafed a longer lease of life. They were succeeded by men of straw, whose short-lived regimes became notorious for intrigue, ineptitude and desperate wickedness. The components of the Maratha Empire, at no time well-knit, fell apart and allowed themselves to be defeated in detail by the British. The belief that the Deccan highlanders were moving under formidable omens to continental sovereignty soon gave place to despair. It is true that the sagacious Mahadji Sindhia, who had taken possession of Delhi in February 1771 and become the protector of the puppet Emperor, cherished the dream of uniting the country through Moghul and Maratha collaboration. But he received little support from his principals at Poona, who themselves needed protection from the imbecility of their counsels. There was in fact no State or government in India that could view the country as a whole as the area of a single administration. The so-called leaders of the people were much too preoccupied with the pastime of supplanting each other to be able to appreciate the value of unity. After the lapse of many centuries, the image of India as the motherland of a common people became a reality only under British rule.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 402.

3. THE ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY

FOR nearly one and a half centuries after it had received its trading charter from Queen Elizabeth in A.D. 1600, the English Company entertained no ambitious schemes of territorial conquest in this country. The state of affairs both in England and in India demanded that it should confine its activities strictly to its normal avocations. In spite of her valuable contribution to contemporary scientific knowledge, as exemplified by Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood in 1624 and Robert Boyle's memorable work in chemical science, England in the seventeenth century counted for little in the "weights and measures of continental politics". Neither her naval victory over Spain in 1588 nor her pre-eminence in the kingdom of letters, secured through the immortal works of Shakespeare, had won for her much respect among the European countries. In fact, as Fisher observes, whoever deserved to rule the waves in Charles II's first Dutch wars, it was not Britannia. In a naval engagement between the two countries in June 1666, the Dutch admiral, De Ruyter, inflicted some eight thousand casualties on the English fleet, its sailors being found "floating in the water dressed in their Sunday black just as they had been caught after church by the press gang".¹

Conditions inside the country itself were no better. The advent of the Stuarts involved it in a long and bitter conflict between the Crown on the one hand and the Parliament and the people on the other. James I and his son were not only faithful adherents of the Roman Church, under whose long reign, to quote Fisher again, "Europe had received no lesson in religious toleration", but also ardent sacerdotalists. Believing in the doctrine "no bishop, no king" with the force of an obsession, the Stuarts gave every encouragement to the obsequious prelates that surrounded them to propound the preposterous doctrine that the King held the crown by right divine. The people of England,

¹ *A History of Europe*, H. A. L. Fisher, Edward Arnold, 1936, p. 669.

however, firmly rejected such pretensions on the part of their Romanish Kings and demanded the substitution of a parliamentary title for divine right as the basis of both the crown and the government of the realm. The religious and constitutional dispute flared up into a civil war which raged for five years till 1646 and culminated in the establishment of the Cromwellian dictatorship. In fact, the struggle for supremacy between the crown and the Parliament was continued in the subsequent centuries when the Whig party persistently fought for the establishment in England of a system of government in which the will of the people as expressed by Parliament should prevail. Amidst her domestic distractions, it was impossible for England, even if she was so determined, to embark upon a career of conquest in India.

Political quarrels in England did not, however, seriously affect her economic progress. Her material prosperity was secured, not as a result of any far-reaching mechanical inventions, which were to herald the advent of the Industrial Revolution only in later decades, but on account of the reclamation of waste lands, the extension and development of colonies—but not in India—and the “freedom of the country for a long period from any serious land war”.² Sir Josiah Child, who, along with his brother, played a leading part in the Indian affairs of the period, wrote in his famous publication *Discourse on Trade* in 1670 that both the merchants and shipping in England had doubled in twenty years. Another contemporary observer, Petty, drew attention to the many-sided prosperity of the country, while Davenant, who studied England’s material condition at the time of the Revolution, declared that the tonnage of the merchant shipping in 1688 was nearly double of what it had been in 1666. England’s population at the beginning of the eighteenth century is estimated to have been under six million, about one-tenth of which was concentrated in London.

Many factors helped England to achieve a stable and a fast-developing economy. The Revolution of 1688 and the union of Scotland in 1707 were memorable landmarks, not only in the political but also in the economic history of Britain. Keenly

² *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, W. E. Lecky, Vol. I, Longmans, 1878, p. 193.

observant, the London merchants beheld with what amazing rapidity their Dutch rivals had risen to power and prosperity by adopting efficient techniques of commerce and finance. Established in 1609, the Bank of Amsterdam had become the supreme example of their financial wisdom which greatly accounted for a small country like Holland finding the means for "financing navies, armies, and great commercial enterprises out of all proportion to its exiguous area and population". England adopted such a prudent course of action towards the end of the seventeenth century by establishing the Bank of England and the National Debt which, as in Holland, provided a sound basis for English commercial credit. "The engines of the Industrial Revolution," writes Fisher, "which made England so rich and powerful that she was able to stand the strain of the Napoleonic wars, were moved by the oil of finance; and at the heart of the English financial system stood the Bank."³ England's victories in India in the latter half of the eighteenth century and later, both against her European rivals and her Indian adversaries, were largely due to the fact that the adventures of her representatives in this country were backed by the most opulent city and the largest sea-faring population in the world.

But, as we saw in the previous chapter, the early record of the English Company in India was by no means spectacular, although, with the passage of years, it increased both the volume of its business and the margin of its profits. For seventy years, it wisely adhered to Sir Thomas Roe's admonition that it should pursue a wholly unaggressive and mercantile policy. It directed its commercial activities in the country mostly from the port towns of Surat, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, which, with the exception of the first-named city, eventually became the political and administrative centres of the British *Raj*. There were also a large number of subsidiary settlements, such as Cambay, Broach, Baroda, Ahmedabad, Agra, Calicut, Tellicherry, Rajapur and Karwar. In Bengal, the chief subordinate factories were at Patna, Dacca, Kasimbazaar, Balasore, and Hughli. In the early decades of the seventeenth century, Masulipatam held pride of place in English commerce on the east coast, but the fortunes of this Andhra port town declined, with the establishment of

³ *A History of Europe*, H. A. L. Fisher, p. 77.

Madras. In 1640, Francis Day, a member of the Masulipatam Council, obtained a valuable concession from a petty Raja, who gave him a narrow strip of land about 230 miles south of Masulipatam, with permission to build a fortified factory. Within a few years, a new town sprang up round the guns of the fortified settlement which was called Fort St. George.

Surat, on the west coast, the first English settlement and also the foremost emporium of the east, remained the Company's chief commercial centre till 1685, when the headquarters were transferred to Bombay. Gifted by the Portuguese King to Charles as part of his daughter's dowry in 1661, Bombay was then a struggling and unhealthy hamlet, revealing only to the discerning eye that it was not only the gateway of India but could also become the best harbour in the country. This pearl of great price was sold by the English King to the Company in 1668 at a ridiculous rent of ten pounds a year! When Bombay went to England, an observant Viceroy of Goa lamented: "India will be lost (by the Portuguese) on the same day on which the English nation is settled in Bombay." By promising facilities and guaranteeing complete immunity from religious intolerance, in contra-distinction to the persecuting policies of the Portuguese, the Company attracted entrepreneurs from different parts of the country who played an outstanding part in building up an obscure village into the *urbs prima in Indis*.

In Bengal too, the Company gained control over a large and growing commerce. Traditionally rich, the province abounded, as Bernier observed, "in every necessary of life". Aurangzeb, who drained Bengal of its wealth during his long and disastrous wars in the Deccan, called it in his typical manner "a hell well-stocked with bread"! It was this region which became the citadel of English political power in India in later centuries. His professional skill helped Gabriel Broughton, an English surgeon, to obtain in 1650 valuable commercial concessions for his Company from his patron, the Moghul subedar. Hughli came into existence in 1651 and seven years later all the settlements in the province and on the Coromandel coast were brought under the control of Fort St. George. In 1687 the chief Bengal agency was removed from Hughli to Calcutta. Macaulay writes that during the twenty years succeeding the Restoration, the

value of the annual imports from Bengal alone rose from £8,000 to £300,000.

In fact, the profits made by the Company from its monopoly of the Indian trade were enormous. In 1617, when the second joint stock was raised, a sum of £1,620,040 was promptly subscribed in London. The records of 1622 reveal that goods bought in India for £356,288 were sold in England for £1,914,600. Articles like calicoes, pepper, tea, silks, indigo and saltpetre yielded large profits. We have the testimony of Weber that India "enjoyed world-wide celebrity" for the superiority of her technical arts. The annual exports of Indian cotton fabrics in the seventeenth century are estimated to have been 8,000 bales, more than half of which were imported by Europe. Both then and long after, till Lancashire began to produce cloth on power-driven machines, England remained a major market for Indian textiles, a portion of which, as at present, was re-exported by that country at attractive prices.

The decades 1660-1680 were noteworthy for the affluence of the Company. It declared a dividend of 20 per cent on the paid-up capital in each of the years 1662-64 and doubled the rate in 1665. Dividends between the years 1659 and 1691 averaged 25 per cent *per annum*. The experience of a shareholder, John Evelyn, is interesting. He subscribed to the Company's stocks in 1657 and sold his share of £500, bought at £250, for £750 to the Royal Society. If he had retained the share till 1691, he would have received an average annual return of nearly 22 per cent on his original outlay.

It was natural that the Company's prosperity provoked the jealousy of other merchants in London. In 1698, they formed a new enterprise after obtaining a Royal Charter by promising to lend the financially embarrassed Government two million pounds at eight per cent. The two Companies entered the competitive arena with a complete lack of scruples and disgraced themselves in the eyes of the Indian people by their squabbles and violence. The discreditable and damaging contest was, however, closed by the two bodies merging into one. This essential reform was accomplished in 1702 through the good offices of Godolphin, just before the War of the Spanish Succession and immediately after the accession of Queen Anne.

Although the amalgamation became effective in 1708-09, it was a wise measure since it now became possible to concentrate all the enterprise, the capital and the maritime experience of one powerful corporation upon the consolidation of England's position in India. The trade returns in the succeeding decades revealed the wisdom of the move. The value of the Company's imports rose from nearly £500,000 in 1708 to about £1,100,000 in 1748, while its exports rose from £576,000 in 1710 to £1,121,000 forty years later.⁴

The growing prosperity of the Company stimulated in the breasts of its Directors aspirations that were wholly unrelated to the business of buying and selling. Sir Josiah Child, to whose publication a reference has been made earlier, was an uncompromising opponent of free trade and an enthusiastic advocate of imperialism. As Governor of the Company and Chairman of the Court of Directors, he held a pivotal position in its affairs. He was competent and hardworking but was devoid of all moral principles. Under his guidance, the Company considered it wise to declare in 1687 in one of its dispatches its determination to "establish such a polity of civil and military power and create and secure such a large revenue . . . as may be the foundation of a large, well-grounded, sure English dominion in India for all time to come".

It fell to Sir John Child, the brother of Sir Josiah, to give effect to this boastful declaration of English policy in India. The second Child was, in the words of Raynal, "avaricious, turbulent and savage" and, according to another testimony, "a deceiver and oppressor for their sakes". His system of administration and that of his brother were "essentially dishonest". Sir John was sincere in his attempts to promote the Company's interests and since its policy was unprincipled, "he was quite ready to make it his". This man, who hoped to elevate his countrymen in India from the position of "interlopers" into a nation of rulers, tempted fate by instigating violent and piratical acts against the Moghul Government. The retribution that overtook him and his associates was swift and terrible. Under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb, the factories of the Company in the country were seized and such armed resistance as was

⁴ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, 1929, p. 108.

attempted against the imperial forces was quelled with the ease of squashing a fly! The merchants' war policy ended in the evacuation of Bengal and in the obliteration of nearly everything that had been built up by them in the country for more than fifty years. It also resulted in an estimated loss of four hundred and sixteen thousand pounds to the Company. Child, the arch-aggressor, was expelled from the country.

Such recklessness on the part of the Company's officials faithfully reflected the calibre of the men that were sent out to India from England. They confirmed Lecky's observation that men of ordinary character usually deteriorate when severed from ties of home traditions, associations and opinions. In fact, the type of Englishman that came to this country fully conformed to the policy of the Company which did not want to "employ any gentleman in any place of charge". It reinforced this astounding decision with the plea that it should be allowed to "sort out" its business "with men of their own quality, lest the employment of gentlemen being taken hold upon by the generality, do drive a great number of the adventurers to withdraw their contributions". As the author, who draws attention to this remarkable passage says, the first English factors "were above, or, perhaps we should say below, all suspicion of being gentlemen".⁵ There were several weighty reasons for hastening the dissolution of their moral and physical standards. The salaries paid to the Company servants were very low, but the attractions of private trading, with all the prospects of early personal enrichment, were irresistible. The warning of sagacious men against the system of private trading went unheeded so long as the Company continued to make steady profits, but it had grown into an almost ineradicable vested interest by the time the authorities were awakened to its dangers. The magnitude of its wickedness became evident when from the latter half of the eighteenth century the Company officials came into a plenitude of political power without any check upon their freedom to buy and sell goods on their own account. In fact, the post-Plassey period has become notorious in the British Indian history as the era of *Nabobs*, a tribe of rapacious men

⁵ *The English in Western India*, Philip Anderson, Smith, Elder, London, 1856, p. 45.

who descended upon this country like hungry locusts and after devouring its wealth went back to their homes to dazzle their countrymen with their ill-gotten riches.

We have thus before us a contemporary and unvarnished picture of the Englishmen of the seventeenth century in India, who, whatever estimable qualities they might have possessed, were certainly not supermen. Nor is it historically tenable to assume that their descendants could transform themselves into an entirely new race, shedding all the infirmities and shortcomings of their ancestors within the span of one or two centuries. And yet India, some twenty times bigger than Britain, fell prostrate before these men. It is true that they enjoyed many important advantages that were denied to Indians. First, the sinews of war at England's command were certainly far superior to those of India; secondly, as the mistress of the sea, her access to the Indian sub-continent could never be effectively challenged; thirdly, long and hazardous voyages and journeys across oceans and continents, gave the Englishmen a range of perception that was denied to a land-locked people; and, lastly, the generality of the Englishmen, whatever the calibre of individuals, were more devoted to their country and King than were the people of this country to theirs. And yet none of these factors would have helped Britain to gain dominion over India if only her people had set their face firmly against it. It was their disunity that forced them to make a gift of their motherland to the British.

Besides the French, there were two types of Indian Powers whom the British were called upon to deal with before establishing their ascendancy in this country. For the Muslims, the Mandate of Heaven, to use a Chinese expression, had long been exhausted so that, with the exception of Haidar Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan, whose rise to sovereignty, incidentally, was a mere political freak, their opposition to British expansion was pitifully feeble and totally ineffective. The credentials of Hyderabad, Bengal and Oudh, the so-called "succession States", to independent sovereignty were bogus. Indeed, it is impossible to name two principal States in India that were as abjectly pliant and helpless as Hyderabad and Oudh had been in their political relations with the British Indian Government. The military

strength of both was contemptible and their continued existence was entirely due to the generosity or to the policy of their powerful neighbours. Bengal was a little more mettlesome, but that was largely because usurpations of the seats of power in that province by energetic adventurers were rather frequent. The real contest for Indian sovereignty, therefore, took place between the British and the Marathas, while later the Sikhs went down after fighting valiantly in defence of Ranjit Singh's realm. Nepal's heroic resistance to British encroachments furnishes a memorable lesson in patriotism.

It is not a mere accident of history that the foundations of British rule in India were laid in the south where no durable political landmarks had survived the destruction of the Vijayanagar Empire in the latter half of the sixteenth century. A number of Hindu principalities, including Mysore, Travancore, Cochin, Tanjore, Tiruchirapalli (Trichinopoly) and Madura, vainly competed for the southern sovereignty, thus giving an invaluable opportunity to the Nawab of Carnatic, an officer of the Moghul Government, to establish his own ascendancy in the region, with Arcot as his headquarters. The chaos that overtook the imperial affairs after Aurangzeb's death in 1707 stimulated the Nawab's ambitions, although he had to reckon with the Nizam-ul-Mulk who, though an officer himself, asserted paramountcy rights over him. The Marathas exposed the absurdity of the claims of both by invading the south in 1740. In May of that year, they inflicted a crushing defeat on the Nawab and killed him, his son and many other prominent commanders in battle. They captured his son-in-law, Hussain Dost Khan, popularly known as Chanda Saheb, and carried him off to Maharashtra as a hostage. The Marathas, however, failed to consolidate their position in the south.

The death of the aged Nizam in May 1748 involved the south in two wars of succession in which the English and their rivals, the French, took part without realising at the time that they were in fact contesting for India's sovereignty. French thinkers and policy-makers were generally averse to overseas adventures which they regarded as unnecessary for their national well-being. Voltaire dismissed North America as "a few acres of snow", while a front-rank French statesman declared that all colonies

were not worth a pin's head ! But men like J. B. Colbert (1669-83), the celebrated Minister of Louis XIV, were convinced that France's material prosperity could be best advanced by means of a great maritime empire and global trade. The French East India Company that came into existence in 1664 owed its inspiration not a little to Colbert's forward policy. The enterprise began to make good progress with its affairs in India after the reformation of French finances and the reconstitution of the Company in 1720.

Important among its Indian possessions were Pondicherry, established by François Martin in 1674, Mahe and Karikal, acquired in 1725 and 1739 respectively, and Chandranagar, occupied in 1691. Under the wise and courageous administration of Martin from 1681-1706, Pondicherry, the capital of French India, developed into a large and populous town inhabited by 70,000 persons. Between 1728 and 1740, the value of French exports from India increased nearly ten times from £89,000 to £880,000. Britain, of course, transacted a much bigger Indian business, for in 1740 her imports from this country were worth £1,795,000. It is, however, evident from these figures that there was ample scope for the enterprises of both the countries to earn well from the Indian trade, but neither of them was prepared to take such a broad view. They contended that there could not be two swords in the same scabbard !

Thus the contest between the English and the French in India was at first a struggle, not for political power, but for commercial supremacy in the country. To gain this end, they fought one another on land and sea almost on all occasions when England and France were at war in Europe. The War of the Austrian Succession, followed by the Seven Years' War gave them ample scope from 1740 to 1763 to test their relative strength in India. Dupleix, who became Governor of Pondicherry in January 1742 after a brilliant commercial career in North India, was a man of extraordinary abilities. In his plans to cause the discomfiture of his country's traditional enemy, he was assisted by another gifted Frenchman, La Bourdonnais, described as "one of the bravest and most skilful seamen France has ever produced". They easily overwhelmed the English and captured Madras in 1746 and would perhaps have inflicted much

heavier damage on their rivals if the two self-willed men could act in concert a little longer. La Bourdonnais returned to France to be flung into the Bastille for nearly three years on trumped up charges. In 1748, the English staged a counter-attack and, under the leadership of Admiral Boscawen and Major Lawrence, succeeded in regaining their lost possessions. They, however, failed to capture Pondicherry and the indecisive trial of strength between the rivals was temporarily abandoned following the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.

When the hostilities between the two nations were resumed, they took on an entirely new complexion in India. Their struggle for commercial monopoly became merged into the dynastic wars of the Indian princes so that what emerged from the conflict was a fateful political decision. Dupleix gave military assistance to Chanda Saheb, who had now been released by the Marathas, to unseat the ruling Nawab of Arcot, Anwarudin Khan, who had been appointed to that position by the Nizam. The Nawab was defeated and slain at Ambur near Vellore in August 1749, while his son, Muhammad Ali, fled for life and took shelter in the fort of Tiruchirapalli.

The vacant *masnad* of Hyderabad was contested by the dead Nizam's second son, Nasir Jang, and his grandson, Muzaffar Jang, the latter being the French candidate. Nasir Jang seemed to carry everything before him, but his career was cut short by a rebel leader who shot him dead in December 1750, which helped the French to proclaim their protege as the Subedar of the Deccan. The wealth seized from Nasir Jang's camp was carried to Pondicherry which overflowed with money. "Eighteen chests of jewels," writes Dodwell, "and a crore of rupees in specie, besides bullion, are said to have been carried to Pondicherry."⁶ This episode presents an illuminating example of how India's immense wealth began to be transferred from the hands of her effete princes to European adventurers who, as we shall see presently, stripped many rich provinces bare. The new Nizam was also assassinated, but Bussy, the French general, retrieved the situation for his country by promptly elevating Nasir Jang's brother, Salabat Jang, to the Subedarship and

⁶ *Dupleix and Clive: The Beginning of Empire*, Henry Dodwell, Methuen, 1920, p. 52.

bolstered it up with his *corps d'armee*. It was a shining hour for Dupleix since the rulers of two large principalities were now his pliant and obsequious clients. Thus, a series of events conspired to convert his commercial ambitions into almost unlimited opportunities for founding France's political ascendancy in this country. But his dreams were short-lived.

At this critical juncture in the affairs of his masters in India, Robert Clive, the son of an impoverished English squire, emerged from the obscurity of his position as a merchant's clerk to take his place in history. His strategem to relieve Muhammad Ali, the ally of the English, who had been besieged by Chanda Saheb at Tiruchirapalli, by making a bold diversionary attack on Arcot, the capital of Carnatic, proved a great success. It was his great good fortune that the task of capturing and defending Arcot fell to him. Though adjudged as no great military feat, his performance brought him instant fame as an inspired leader. His night attack and victory over the French at Kaveripak strengthened this belief since the action is claimed to have "changed the balance of French and English influence in India". Chanda Saheb was captured in June 1752 and executed by his enemy, Muhammad Ali, who now ascended the 'throne' of Carnatic by the grace of the British. For the failure of his mission in India, Dupleix was recalled and disgraced by his Government.

On the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in Europe, Lally Tollendal, an Irishman by descent, was sent to India with orders to retrieve the French fortunes in this country. Lally, who had fought for the Jacobites in the '45 and had "still an unexpended balance of hatred to discharge against the English people", was a brave but headstrong soldier who knew nothing of this country or its people. In January 1760, he was decisively defeated by Colonel Coote at Wandiwash, Bussy being among those that were taken prisoner. On his return to France, Lally was tried for treason and executed. By April 1761, the French had nothing left of their Indian empire except a few settlements. Admiral Suffren's belated attempts in 1782-83 to recover the glory of Dupleix's days proved illusory.

The reasons for France's failure in India were obvious. First, it was impossible for the French Company to display any

enthusiasm or initiative so long as it was run like a State enterprise, with its affairs being "supervised by priests, nobles and high officials". The intellectuals of France showed great contempt for the commercial activities of their countrymen abroad and this is exemplified by the derisive language employed by Lally's biographers against the Directors of the Company. Secondly, with the Bastille and the executioner's axe constantly looming before their mind's eye, the French executives in India preferred to tread the safe path of conformity which was certainly not helpful in building up enterprises and empires. While France recalled and disgraced men like La Bourdonnais and Dupleix, England encouraged, honoured and lionised Robert Clive, Stringer Lawrence and Eyre Coote. Thirdly, France made the capital mistake of deciding in 1740 to join Frederick of Prussia in his wars of aggression. Her involvement in an exhausting continental war undermined her ability to face the English overseas. In fact, England emerged much stronger both materially and militarily from the prolonged European conflict of 1740-63. Lastly, England's naval supremacy gave her an inestimable advantage over her adversary. "While French ships," Fisher observes, "from their distant base in Mauritius refused to cross the Indian Ocean in the monsoon, there was no season of the year at which naval help was not available for the support of the English interest." With the entire south at her feet and, as we shall now recount, with the whole of Bengal under her control, Britain began to discover that an imperial destiny awaited her in this country.

The Company was always mindful of the value of Bengal in advancing its commercial prosperity. Bengal was in fact India's richest province. In the days of Akbar, its revenue, according to the estimate of his minister, Todar Mal, was one crore of rupees and was nearly double that amount in the middle of the eighteenth century. The province transacted an enormous volume of business in muslin, silk, sugar, jute, saltpetre, opium and in many other commodities so that its export earnings during the half century from 1706 to 1756 amounted to nearly Rs. 6½ crores in bullion and about Rs. 2.3 crores in the form of merchandise.⁷ But, paradoxically, despite the great prosperity of the province,

⁷ *History of the Freedom Movement*, Dr. Tara Chand, Vol. I, p. 252.

the people were steeped in poverty and misery, largely on account of the pitiless exploitation of its resources by its rulers. Shaista Khan, Aurangzeb's uncle, who held charge of the Bengal government twice for long periods, is alleged to have frittered away its riches by spending fifty thousand rupees on himself everyday! When he left the province, he is believed to have taken thirty-eight crores of rupees with him.⁸ At the behest of the Emperor, Murshid Kuli Khan, the Chancellor of the province, diverted its revenues to the imperial coffers in order to finance Aurangzeb's suicidal wars against the Marathas. The result was that "no one in Bengal was fated to see a silver piece for a long time", the commercial transactions being conducted in "shell coins".⁹ "The wealth of the Nawab," writes Dr. Tara Chand, "and of his oppressive oligarchs was extracted out of the toil and misery of the impoverished peasants and wretched artisans. The upstart rulers and their long-suffering subjects were bound together by mere ropes of sand."

The last but one in the line of such upstarts was Allahwardi Khan who died on April 21, 1756, after governing the province well for fifteen years. He was succeeded by his grandson, Siraj-ud-Daula, whose ignorance and impetuosity were as great as his haughtiness. By his cruelty and recklessness, Siraj antagonised both his Hindu and Muslim subjects, all of whom dreaded his administration like a nightmare. He caused mortal offence to Mahatabchand, the head of the famous banking house of Jagat Seth (world bankers), by threatening violence to his person. He failed to realise that the new class of monied Indians, like the Pillais of French India and the Mudaliars of Madras, who owed their affluence to their commercial relations with the European Companies in the country, had acquired an influence sometimes more powerful than the authority of a potentate. Siraj was equally imprudent in incurring the enmity of Mir Jafar, a powerful nobleman who was also his kinsman. But the rupture in his relations with the English Company was entirely due to the high-handed and discourteous behaviour of its officials towards him. A more circumspect person would perhaps have secured satisfaction from the foreigners through peaceful

⁸ *The Road to Plassey*, Tapanmohan Chatterji, Orient Longmans, 1960, p. 8.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 8, 39.

methods, but Siraj was anything but cautious. In June 1756, he marched on the town of Calcutta and captured Fort William by assault, but unwisely allowed the English Governor to escape to Fulta with his ships. The expedition is memorable since it furnished an opportunity to V. Z. Holwell, "a plausible and none too reliable man", to invent the impudent myth about the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Clive, who was sent to Bengal from Madras to deliver his countrymen from a desperate situation, and Admiral Watson wrote threatening letters to the Nawab peremptorily demanding reparations for "all the losses" sustained by their Company. They wanted a war with him, as they had heard that he had secreted forty million pounds sterling in his vaults. Siraj readily obliged them by marching a mighty but disaffected and ill-organised army against the English on June 22, 1757.

A good deal has been written about the Battle of Plassey which is undoubtedly a memorable event in the British Indian history. It is from that date that the era of the Company Government is claimed to have begun and it is also used to compute the duration of British rule in this country. But, as a battle, it was no more than a cannonade since Siraj's army of 50,000 men was frightened out of the battlefield by a mere 3,000 troops from the English side. And yet Clive, who had earlier ensured that the enemy would never fight, faced the armed multitude with a failing heart!¹⁰ It is not pleasant to pull down a man who has been so assiduously raised to the pedestal of a hero. H. A. L. Fisher claims that Clive's career "is one of the romances of the world", while Prof. Coupland calls him "the greatest British soldier, it has been thought, since Marlborough".¹¹ Such superlative praise can only be attributed to the profound sense of gratitude felt by these writers to a man who, however unwittingly, paved the way for the establishment of British dominion in India. No other interpretation is possible, for we search in vain in the pages of the Indian history for the counterpart of Blenheim or Ramillies, fought and won against a first-class foe, with Clive at the head of the victorious

¹⁰ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, p. 150. Also *The Oxford History of India*, 1958, p. 468.

¹¹ *India: A Re-statement*, Sir Reginald Coupland, Oxford, 1945, p. 21.

armies. In fact, as a competent writer observes, the hero of Plassey rather deserved pity for his unearned laurels.¹²

Mir Jafar, who had practised "circumspect treachery" against his ruler, was raised to the vacant throne and the grateful man disbursed enormous sums of money to his benefactors, despite the fact that Siraj's reputed hoardings turned out to be grossly exaggerated. Clive estimated that after Plassey, the Company and private individuals were enriched by three million sterling, while his own share in the loot was £231,000 and an annuity of £30,000 to sustain his new-fangled nobility secured from the titular King of Delhi. This was not a small achievement on his part. Beginning his career as a clerk on £10, he returned to his country as His Britannic Majesty's richest subject! Sir Edward Colebrooke does not mince words when he characterises the payments, not as presents, but as "moneys bargained for the sale of a province under a transaction stained with falsehood and treachery throughout".¹³

The notorious era of the *Nabobs* had now begun. The spectacle of the Company's servants returning to England laden with riches, produced a widespread impression among all classes of the British people that India was indeed a land abounding in wealth-bearing trees which only needed to be shaken in order to yield the adventurers large riches so that they could be taken home to be used with impunity for corrupting the founts of British life. Men like Clive and Paul Benfield, another notorious adventurer who operated in the Carnatic, purchased immunity for their shady transactions in India by entering the British Parliament with their accomplices. British parliaments of the Hanoverian period were not distinguished either for the gift of social compassion or for upright conduct.

Treated as a tool by the English and despised as a traitor by his people, Mir Jafar could not administer his charge well even if he was capable of doing so. He soon discovered that he had sold his soul for a mess of pottage by siding with the foreigners. The calls upon the finances of the province assumed enormous proportions. Besides paying for the army of occupation, he found himself compelled to meet the irregular but exorbitant

¹² *Clive of Plassey*, A. Mervyn Davies, Nicholson and Watson, 1939, p. 221.

¹³ *History of British India under the Company and the Crown*, P. I. Roberts, Oxford, 1938, p. 144

and unending demands of individual servants of the Company. Seeing the magnificence of the *Nabobs* around them and believing that the wealth of Bengal was vast and unlimited, the Directors of the Company and the British Government itself stretched their hands to grasp as much as they could. Money was also required for Mir Jafar's costly eccentricities and for the expenses of his government such as it was. While there was such a prodigious increase in expenditure, the sources of revenue began to dry up rapidly. From as far back as 1717, the Company enjoyed through an imperial *farman* certain commercial rights in Bengal in the shape of exemption from all import and export levies on its foreign trade. The concession did not materially affect the revenues of the province. But Mir Jafar, in the exuberance of his gratitude to the English, not only bribed them munificently but also signed the death-warrant of Bengal by conferring on the Company's servants the right to take part in its inland trade without having to pay the usual tolls. Since no such concession was extended to Indian merchants and entrepreneurs, the Nawab's thoughtless gesture proved disastrous. By an unscrupulous use of the system of *dustuck* or *laissez-passer*, the concession-holders and their minions captured the flourishing inland trade of Bengal and seriously undermined the economic life of the province by their self-aggrandizement. The Company soon tired of Mir Jafar who was ousted in favour of his son-in-law, Mir Kasim, in October 1760.

Mir Kasim was a competent and determined person who refused to reconcile himself to the position of king in a pack of cards, but the crisis of Bengal could not be overcome by the exertions of mere individuals. Ironically, Clive was commissioned in 1765 to cleanse the province's Augean stables. Apart from the fact that his new-fangled zeal for pure administration was dismissed as sanctimonious humbug, the corruption, the venality and the inefficiency of the Government could not be eliminated except by abolishing the dual system. The right of *diwani*, obtained by Clive from Emperor Shah Alam, in exchange for the payment of an annual tribute of Rs. 26 lakhs and the cession of the districts of Korah and Allahabad, merely accentuated the evil of divided responsibility. It was useless to confer on the Company the right of collecting the revenues of

Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, without at the same time placing the instruments of government at its disposal. It was not till 1772, when the Company affirmed its determination "to stand forth as Dewan and by the agency of the Company's servants to take upon themselves the entire management of the revenues" that the dual system was ended. Clive was, however, not to blame for his failure to promote such a reform. Whatever his soldierly qualities—and it is useless to compare them with those of famous commanders—he was not a statesman. Nevertheless, he saw with admirable clarity the need for hastening slowly in the acquisition of new territories by the Company. His letter to Pitt on the Indian question reveals that he was really a man of great comprehension.

Mir Kasim began his career by heavily bribing the leading Company servants in the hope of purchasing their non-interference in the affairs of his government. He saw that the embarrassed state of his dominion's finances could never be remedied unless the customs duties that formed the mainstay of Bengal's revenues were collected without discrimination. In March 1762, he bitterly complained that the *dustuck* system was strangling the economic life of his kingdom. His plea for ending the scandal was heartily endorsed by Vansittart, President of the Calcutta Council, and by Warren Hastings, a rising man in the Company's service. But the rest of the English community in Bengal rejected it with indignation since reform would have severely restricted the scope for personal enrichment. Burning with indignation at his inability to persuade the foreigners to see the error of their ways and exasperated by his exposure to daily affronts, Mir Kasim took the decisive step in March 1763 of abolishing all inland customs throughout his territories. Thus, at one stroke, risking a further decline in his revenues, he deprived the Company's officials of the unfair advantage they had so far been enjoying. His free trade order, though applauded by men like Warren Hastings, was deeply resented by other overbearing servants of the Company who provoked an open conflict with the Nawab.

The dispute between Mir Kasim and his tormentors was settled on the battlefield of Buxar on October 22, 1764, when Major Munro emerged victorious. The Nawab lost his throne which

was allowed to be re-occupied by his father-in-law, Mir Jaffar, while the homeless Emperor became a British pensioner. Shuja-ud-Daula, the Nawab Vazier of Oudh, discovered that there was greater security for him under British paramountcy and accordingly concluded on August 16, 1765, a treaty of "reciprocal friendship" with the Company. After the death of Mir Jaffar in 1763, his place was taken by another phantom ruler, Nazim-ud-Daula, who was granted Rs. 53 lakhs for his own and his household's expenses. Welcoming the Company's generosity, the new man declared with disarming candour: "Thank God! I shall now have as many dancing girls as I please."

The *malaise* of misgovernment and oppression in the Company's territories and in its client States could not, however, be cured by facile devices like palace revolutions. It was imperative that the Company's officials in India, their principals and the Parliament in England should moderate their expectations and demands if this country was to be saved from the abyss of bankruptcy. Bengal's gross revenue, according to Clive's estimate in 1765, was four million sterling which, after expenses, left the Company a net income of £1,650,000. Such a handsome surplus induced the Directors to raise the rate of the dividend for distribution, while Parliament asked for contributions from Indian revenue for the relief of poverty in England, forgetting the time-honoured saying that charity begins at home. The British Government was none too loth to make such a demand and in 1766 it called upon the Company to make an annual payment of £400,000 to the Crown. Its total annual receipts from India were estimated at not less than two million "so that the British nation took heavy blackmail upon the Company's gains, however they may have been gotten".¹⁴

Thanks to such massive claims and to rampant corruption and venality, a prosperous trading concern found itself involved in enormous debts which in this period amounted to six million sterling. The white man became a much-dreaded symbol of oppression and the sight of him drove people to seek refuge in hills and in unfrequented resorts, thus confirming Confucius' sage observation that even a wilderness infested with man-eating

¹⁴ *The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India*, Sir Alfred Lyall, John Murray, 1907, pp. 172-3.

tigers is preferable to an oppressive government. The bulk of the people of Bengal, who had lost their occupation and means of livelihood, were reduced to pauperism. The cup of their misery overflowed when an appalling famine overcame them in 1770. At least one-fifth of its estimated population of fifteen million perished without food. But the Company's servants were unmoved by the disaster and made no bones about profiteering in the necessities, while the principal deputy added ten per cent to the assessments in order to make good "at the expense of the living the losses involved in the wholesale depopulation".¹⁵ The writer of the well-known chronicle, *Siyar Mutakharin*, lamented that the English, who were such excellent fighters, were so incompetent as administrators. "O God!" he exclaimed, "come to the assistance of thy afflicted servants, and deliver them from the oppressions they suffer."¹⁶

The agonised cries of the suffering humanity of Bengal were at last heard in England and stung the conscience of the high-minded in that country. Offended by the brutality and the unappeased appetites of their countrymen in India, Horace Walpole attacked them in a language that has rightly become memorable. "India," thundered Pitt, "teems with iniquities so rank as to smell to earth and heaven". A sequel to such concerted crusade against injustice was the adoption of a series of legislative measures, beginning with the Regulating Act of 1773, designed to give an orderly and efficient government to India. The corruption had, however, developed into a canker, for which there was no easy remedy. "The portrait of Bengal," wrote Warren Hastings, "falls short of the life. Will you believe that the boys of the service are the sovereigns of the country under the unmeaning title of supervisors, collectors of the revenue, administrators of justice, and rulers, heavy rulers, of the people?"¹⁷ He made a similar complaint about the happenings in Oudh. "Lucknow," he wrote to Macpherson, "was a sink of iniquity. . . . What will you think of clerks in office clamouring for principalities", he asked and added that "in the confidence of exhaustless resources", they gambled away "two lakhs of rupees at a

¹⁵ *A Constitutional History of India*, A. B. Keith, Methuen, 1936, p. 58.

¹⁶ *The Economic History of India*, Romesh Dutt, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1902, pp. 22, 23.

¹⁷ *Warren Hastings*, A. Meivyn Davies, pp. 76, 77.

sitting" and still grumbled "that their wants are not attended to".¹⁸

The picture presented by the south was no less unedifying. Muhammad Ali, the Nawab of Carnatic, was a "dignified, plausible rascal of engaging manners and venerable appearance". He was a Croesus without the treasure and impartially bribed all that mattered with other people's money. "It would be difficult," writes Dodwell, "to name a governor who was neither bribed nor hated" by the Nawab. Few in England could resist his corrupting charm and influence. And yet this man, described by Burke as "a shadow, a dream, an incubus of oppression", was supported by Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control for India in Pitt's Cabinet, who obligingly put through Parliament a resolution charging the Nawab's gigantic debts of five million sterling to the revenues of "a ruined country without any inconvenient examination into their history". When towards the end of the eighteenth century, Hyderabad came within the orbit of the powerful Company as its satellite, it also became a happy hunting ground for European adventurers, the shady transactions of Palmer and Company providing a glaring example of their destructive activities. Charles Metcalfe almost ruined his career while attempting to combat the evil. Burke's oration in 1783 on Fox's India Bill has become a classic in the English language. Condemning this country's exploitation, he declared: "Every rupee of profit made by an Englishman is lost for ever to India".

Thus, the foundations of British rule in India were not laid on just principles. But neither the wrong-headed policies of the Company's Directors at home nor the recklessness of their subordinates in this country could deflect the course of history. Despite its extravagance, the Company's gross revenue in 1792 was £8,225,000 which represented a financial position much superior to that of any one Indian State. Besides, as a powerful trading corporation, it had access to large and mobile resources in contrast to the uncertain and inelastic revenues of its Indian adversaries. Above all, as we shall see in the next chapter, the congenital inability of the Indian States to unite, even in the face of overwhelming danger to their existence, ensured the establishment of British ascendancy throughout the country.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 311.

4. ENGLAND BECOMES SUPREME

WARREN HASTINGS, the first British statesman in India, assumed the Governorship of Bengal in 1772. He was not a stranger to India and had earlier spent fourteen years in the country, serving the Company in various capacities. He was an intellectual and a scholar and evinced deep and sincere interest in the country's ancient cultural heritage. Hastings was a realist and was firmly opposed to all hasty schemes of territorial expansion. Apart from the injunctions of the Court of Directors against embarrassing political entanglements, the territories already acquired by the Company were large enough to gratify the pride of any Power. Besides being much bigger than his homeland, Bengal and Bihar, impoverished by war, famine and exploitation, demanded a long period of peace and efficient administration to ensure their economic rehabilitation. Nor had his countrymen still learnt the value of civility and moderation in their dealings with the Indians so that it would have been imprudent to enlarge the Company's acquisitions before accomplishing their reformation.

But in a period of fast-moving events, Hastings' own predilections were of no importance. The outbreak of the American War of Independence in 1775 saw France and Holland, besides several other countries in Europe, ranged against England. Having to contend with a formidable array of enemies, it was clearly impossible for the home authorities to send any substantial assistance to their subordinates in India. Caution and prudence were, however, a rare virtue in the affairs of the presidencies of Madras and Bombay. With a characteristic lack of foresight, the Madras authorities precipitated a war with Haidar Ali, the powerful ruler of Mysore, by wilfully trespassing into his territories. In July 1780, Haidar marched into Carnatic, carrying fire and sword wherever he went and shattering the armies that ventured to oppose him. He annihilated Baillie's brigade and sent Sir Hector Munro, the victor of Buxar, scurry-

ing for safety to Madras after throwing the Company's guns and equipment into the nearest tank. Hastings' intervention and the generalship of Sir Eyre Coote, the veteran of the Anglo-French Wars, alone saved the situation. Coote's victory at Porto Novo in July 1781, repeated at Arni in June 1782, convinced the Mysore ruler that the honours of the war would no longer be his. He died on December 7, a disillusioned man and filled with doubts whether his less circumspect son would ever realise the danger of measuring the sword with the foreign Power. An untutored genius, Haidar, who had found his *metier* on the battlefield, nevertheless won the esteem of his people for his catholic outlook and efficient administration.

The Company's involvement in two long-drawn out and disastrous wars with the Marathas during Hastings' regime was, as in Madras, due to the imbecility and the rashness of the Bombay authorities. British attitude towards the Marathas was indeed a curious mixture of kicks and caresses. It is a measure of their helplessness that for two hundred years, from the date of Queen Elizabeth's charter to the East India Company till the signing of the Treaty of Bassein by the perfidious Peshwa on December 31, 1802, the English had made no worthwhile acquisitions in the regions where Maratha influence was paramount. Neither during the life-time of Shivaji nor during the convulsive period that followed his death were they able to make any important territorial gains. They made persistent but futile attempts during the first three decades of the eighteenth century to dislodge Kanhoji Angria, the formidable Indian Drake, from his stronghold on the West coast. Neither the royal squadron nor the co-operation of the Portuguese could produce better results.¹ Only intrigue succeeded where valour failed.

On land, the resounding victories of the "fighting Peshwa", Bajirao I, over the veteran Nizam-ul-mulk at Palkhed in February 1728 and again at Bhopal, which forced the Subedar of the Deccan to submit to dictated peace terms in January 1738, established beyond doubt that the Marathas were the strongest military power in India. The capture of Mahim in January

¹ *History of British India under the Company and the Crown*, P. E. Roberts, Clarendon Press, 1938, pp. 70, 71.

1739 and the conquest of Bassein in May from the Portuguese under the generalship of the Peshwa's less known but valiant brother, Chimnaji Appa, furnished a salutary warning to the English about the hazards of cherishing territorial ambitions even around Bombay. It was only after the premature death of Madhavrao Peshwa in 1772 and the assassination of his brother, Narayanrao, within nine months of his elevation to that office that the great Maratha polity began to show signs of weakness.

Raghunathrao, better known as Raghoba, the uncle of the two Peshwas, was strongly suspected of having contrived the murder of Narayanrao. Raghoba's military abilities were considerable and some historians have ventured the view that the issue of the Battle of Panipat in 1761 would perhaps have been different if he had led the Maratha armies against the Afghans. This man, under whose generalship the Marathas achieved the crowning glory of planting their banner on the ramparts of Attock in the Punjab, would have been a great asset to his country and his people if only his ambitions had been honourable and moderate. Instigated by his beautiful but wicked wife, Anandibai, he hankered after the Peshwaship—a goal, in the pursuit of which he made no distinction between ends and means. The fact that in April 1774 a posthumous son was borne to the murdered Peshwa did not abate his quest for the impossible.

Empires are not generally won with the support of moral principles and the Company authorities in Bombay were certainly not the missionaries of right conduct or of right action. They readily entertained the Indian Quisling's application for assistance, despite the plea of the Regency Government at Poona to the King of England not to countenance the traitor.² The home authorities were fair-minded and issued directives to their subordinates in India not to interfere in the domestic concerns of the Marathas.³ But the decisions of the "men on the spot" prevailed. Mostyn, who had watched the growing Maratha distractions at Poona, and Gambier, the flamboyant President of the Bombay Council, deluded themselves with the belief that Raghoba's defection was a death-blow to the power and unity

² *New History of the Marathas*, G. S. Sardesai, Vol. III, Phoenix Publications, 1948, p. 32.

³ *Ibid*, p. 69.

of their neighbours. The result of their illusion was the Treaty of Surat, concluded with Raghoba on March 6, 1775. The mis-conceived and still-born compact provided for large cessions of Maratha territory to the English in return for their help to impose the traitor on his people. Hastings was dismayed when he heard of the Bombay settlement which, being contrary to the provisions of the Regulating Act of 1773, was brushed aside. The Governor-General condemned it as "unseasonable, impolitic, unjust and unauthorised" and, following fresh negotiations under his directions, had it replaced by the Treaty of Purandar, March 1, 1776, which for some time formed the basis of the relations between the two Governments.

By making extravagant offers, Raghoba, however, successfully persuaded his Bombay patrons to ignore the Treaty of Purandar and to undertake a military expedition with the object of installing him at Poona. The promoters of this grandiose project came to grief at once, since the army sent by them was surrounded and threatened with annihilation by the Marathas. The upshot of the mad venture was the Convention of Wadgaon, signed on January 16, 1779, which bound the Company, among other things, to surrender Raghoba to the Marathas and to return to them Salsette, Thana and the territories seized by it in Gujarat. Commenting on the English capitulation, Gleig wrote that never before had they been so thoroughly disgraced since "they established themselves as a substantive power in the East". Sir Alfred Lyall's verdict is equally illuminating. "The essence of the whole matter," he observed, "is that the Marathas were at this period far too strong and too well united to be shaken or overawed by such forces as the English could then afford or bring against them."

Wadgaon was a bitter drench which neither Calcutta nor Bombay was prepared to swallow despite the fact that the Marathas showed the English "greater magnanimity than might have been expected of them under the circumstances".¹⁴ Hastings, known for the lucidity of his mind, allowed it to be clouded by the mortification of defeat and sent Goddard on an expedition exactly similar to that which had led to the capitulation of 1779. History repeated itself with inexorable exact-

⁴ *Warren Hastings*, A. Mervyn Davies, p. 259.

ness, the English suffering heavy casualties in killed and wounded, besides losing large quantities of arms and ammunition. The campaign of Goddard, regarded as the ablest British general then in India, cost the Company one crore and twenty-five lakhs of rupees. The news of the second disaster thoroughly unnerved Hastings who wrote frantically to Bombay to come to terms with the Marathas, without counting the cost or consequences, but at once. "It is not," he declared, "peace with conditions of advantage that we want, but a speedy peace" and added, "I am afraid of nothing but delay."⁵

Nana Phadnis, who was in charge of the Maratha affairs, did not choose to reciprocate Hastings' desire for peace and was content to let the war take its own course. A brilliant statesman, he was one of the very few among his Indian contemporaries who had correctly assessed the magnitude of the peril posed by the rising power of the English to the country's independence. His letters to Haidar Ali and Mahadji Sindhia, communicating his fears about the foreigners, reveal the depth of his insight. In his letter to Sindhia, he urged that full reparations should be demanded from the English for all the wrongs done by them to the Marathas and expressed his confidence that they would never be able to "establish their supremacy at Delhi if the Marathas act vigorously and in union".⁶ In response to the importunities of Sindhia, the Poona statesman, however, reluctantly agreed to call off the war and to negotiate peace with the English. The result was the Treaty of Salbye, concluded on May 17, 1782. Besides providing for territorial adjustments, mostly in favour of the Marathas, the agreement committed the English to forswear for ever their friendship for Raghoba. The disgraced man did not live long after this event and belatedly realised that "he was being used as a mere pawn in the game by the English".⁷

Hastings' part in the Maratha and Mysore Wars involved his Government in serious financial difficulties which forced him to adopt a series of arbitrary and aggressive measures. The attack on the Rohillas, the persecution of Chait Singh, the Maharaja of Banaras, the spoliation of the Begams of Oudh—all to rehabi-

⁵ Ibid, p. 355.

⁶ *A History of the Maratha People*, C. A. Kincaid and D. B. Parasnis Humphry Milford, Vol. III, 1918, p. 141.

⁷ *The Cambridge History of India: British India*, Vol. V, 1929, p. 264.

litate his pauperised administration—and the unexampled malevolence with which he pursued Maharaja Nanda Kumar, till the Indian nobleman was judicially murdered, are among the episodes that were investigated by Parliament after his retirement. As Professor Keith observes, the personal integrity of Hastings was, like that of Clive, “below any decent standard of honesty”. It is also true that the various measures adopted by him did not contribute much either to the purity of the administration or to its efficiency. But, in spite of all his failings, he was an Olympian figure who knew the mind of the Indians as few of his countrymen did. The conviction that he was not dealing with an inferior people prompted him to formulate policies that have survived the vicissitudes of time and political changes and that will ensure the durability of the Indo-British relations. Hastings, wrote Curzon, was “almost the only one in the long list of the British rulers of India who took a real interest in literature, scholarship and the arts”.

Lord Cornwallis, who succeeded Warren Hastings in 1786, came to India with his prestige unimpaired by his surrender to George Washington at York Town in 1781 which virtually ended the American War of Independence. His honesty and uprightness were in striking contrast to the deplorably low standards of political honour that prevailed in his time. His probity and his sense of honour were so transparent that even his ambition became a virtue. The range of his vision, it has been claimed, was worldwide which accustomed him to maps of global dimensions. But even such an enlarged mental horizon did not help him to appreciate the true significance of Tipu Sultan's association with France. Sharing his countrymen's hatred for the Mysore ruler, he came to India determined to cripple, if not to destroy, the State. Tipu's attack on Travancore, an ally of the British, gave the Governor-General the needed pretext for going to war against him. The English were joined in the offensive by the Nizam and the Marathas. The participation of the latter was, however, as surprising as it was ill-judged since it violated Nana Phadnis' own political doctrine on Indian unity. Tipu fought valiantly for two years against the formidable coalition and agreed to sign a humiliating treaty only after Bangalore was stormed and captured in March 1791.

The war deepened his hatred for the enemy, while Cornwallis rejoiced that it gave him an opportunity to practise the doctrine of counterpoise against the Indian Powers, besides humbling his inveterate foe.

In the civil administration of the country, Cornwallis' name is associated with the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, where the prevailing level of land revenue assessment was made "perpetual" in 1793. Reforms were also introduced in the administration of civil and criminal justice, while a large measure of success was attained in combating corruption and graft. Cornwallis held the fallacious view that Indians were neither honest nor competent and gave his prejudice the stamp of official recognition by reserving higher posts exclusively for his own nationals. The evil effects of this unfair policy lasted long after he left the country. His successor, Sir John Shore, who held office from 1793 to 1798, was a champion of the *status quo*. He was a tired man and left the country without making any lasting impression upon the administration.

Lord Wellesley (1798-1805), who succeeded Shore, came to India like a tornado, sweeping everything before him. He was vain, pompous and incredibly arrogant. Writing in 1813, Hazlitt made a devastating criticism of his speeches and demeanour by observing that they were "prodigies of physical prowess and intellectual imbecility". Wellesley believed and behaved as if he had been specially commissioned by Providence to found an empire for England in India to compensate for the loss of the American colonies. He lived in a dreamland of his own creation and seldom descended to *terra firma* in order to discover that India was inhabited by a people known as Indians. He knew little about their ways and habits and certainly nothing about their many miseries and hungers. It was very much like him that he refused to look upon the Indian princes as independent rulers and generally treated them as if they were interlopers in their own States! Wellesley's warlike ardour, it has been recorded by his admirers, was easily heated and when it reached the burning-point, he decreed that there should be no Tipu.

There was a superb combination between Wellesley and Dundas, President of the Board of Control, who decided between

themselves that they should become the arbiters of India's destiny. Exaggerating Tipu's futile negotiations with France, Wellesley provoked a war by making insulting and impossible demands upon him. Tipu chose the only course open to an honourable man and, in the war that ensued, fell with sword in hand on May 4, 1799, when defending his beloved capital, Srirangapattana. Notwithstanding the conflicting contemporary estimates of his character, Tipu was undoubtedly a remarkable man. He was brave, competent and enlightened, although he was sometimes overcome by unrestrained bigotry. The fact that one of his sons was suggested to the British as his successor by his Brahmin prime minister, Purniah, is perhaps the best testimony to his high qualities as a ruler. Dundas, like Sir Thomas Munro, favoured the merger of Mysore into the British Indian territory, but Wellesley, who needed no lessons in annexation, refrained from adopting such a course for weighty political considerations. Rescuing an infant from the Wodiar family from obscurity, he put the child on the Mysore throne, promising the clamorous Dundas a rich repast of territories in other parts of the country.

Wellesley's crowning achievement in India was the destruction of the great Maratha Empire. The Deccan highlanders, who had extended their military sway to a large part of the country, failed disastrously in the last lap of the race for continental sovereignty. Their victory over the French-trained armies of Hyderabad in the Battle of Kharda on March 11, 1795, was the last occasion when all the important leaders of the confederacy fought under the Peshwa's banner for the common cause. After that event and after the tragic death of the young Peshwa Madhavrao II on October 27, Maratha polity fell into irretrievable ruin. Intrigue, chicanery and disunity hastened their downfall. The Peshwa was the pivot of the Empire and, although nobody expected that every holder of that office should be a superman, it was imperative that he should at least be a man of character in order to command the respect of his people.

It was indeed a national misfortune that, following a series of mishaps, the son of the renegade Raghoba was raised to that exalted position in December 1796. The shrewd Nana Phadnis, who saw in Bajirao II the harbinger of Maratha disaster, made

great but unsuccessful attempts to prevent his accession, his principal argument being that Raghoba's son belonged to a family whose honour had been sullied by its relations with the British.⁸ To add to the misfortune of the Marathas, most of their leading personages, whose counsel and guidance were so essential during those critical times, died one after another in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Ahalyabai, the saintly and sagacious Maharani of Indore, died in August 1795, while two years later her competent commander-in-chief, Tukojirao, passed away. Mahadji Sindhia, the most powerful and the ablest chieftain of the realm, whose support had played no small part in stabilizing the Poona Government, died in February 1794. Six years later, on March 13, 1800, Nana Phadnis, the last in the line of the Maratha statesmen, and perhaps the most outstanding among them, breathed his last. Both Wellesley and Colonel Palmer, the British Resident at Poona, paid a high tribute to the statesman, the latter declaring that with him "has departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Maratha Government".

The departure of these stalwarts made room for men of straw to climb to the seats of power. While Bajirao, the Peshwa, was wicked, treacherous, thoughtless and foolishly proud of his position without the ability to maintain it, the successor of the great Mahadji Sindhia was an adopted boy of fourteen. Young Daulatrao inherited a splendid legacy. His adoptive father had been the "actual sovereign of Hindustan from the Sutlej to Agra" and had possessed "two-thirds of Malwa and some of the finest provinces of the Deccan, and had an army composed of sixteen battalions of regular infantry, disciplined by a Frenchman of the name of De Boigne, 100,000 horse, and 500 pieces of cannon".⁹ Within a decade of Mahadji's death, his impetuous and hare-brained successor reduced his great heritage into a broken shell, besides exchanging his independent sovereignty for the status of a despised feudatory of the British.

Yeshwantrao Holkar, another sinister figure of whom Malcolm has drawn a memorable pen-picture, brought the Maratha affairs to a crisis by carrying his feud with Sindhia to the very capital

⁸ *A History of the Marhattas*, Grant Duff, Vol. II, p. 255

⁹ *A Comparative History of India*, Henry Beveridge, Blackie, 1871, Vol. II, p. 661.

of the Empire. The Peshwa, instead of promoting reconciliation between the two self-willed men, provoked Holkar to desperate acts of wickedness by taking the side of Sindhia. In the sequel, the paramount ruler of the Empire became a fugitive from his own realm and signed the ignominious Treaty of Bassein on December 31, 1802, with the British. By doing so, he sold the independence of his Empire and insured the rapid rise of the English to supreme power. "Previously," wrote Sidney Owen with acute perception, "to the treaty, there existed a British Empire in India; the treaty by its direct or indirect operations, gave the Company the Empire of India."¹⁰ So fateful were the implications of the Treaty and so great was the good fortune of the British that they could not for some time believe that the windfall was real. They feared that the Maratha leaders would band themselves together in order to protect their overlord from becoming a feudatory of the British. Writing to the Directors on February 10, 1803, Wellesley said that "if the Peshwa should be tempted to accept a joint proffer from them (Sindhia and Holkar) of restoration to his former authority, instead of relying on the guarantee of the treaty, it was not his intention to attempt to compel the Peshwa to adhere to the faith of his engagements".¹¹ Even at that stage, the Governor-General was not sure that he could gather the windfall into his bag.

Escorted by Arthur Wellesley's troops, Bajirao returned to Poona on May 13, 1803, amidst the curses and wailings of his countrymen, but concerted action to release him from his suicidal commitments was neither seriously contemplated nor taken. The Peshwa never fully realised the magnitude of his perfidy and blithely fell back on his old courses of extortion and profligacy. On the few occasions when he became aware of his fallen condition, he behaved like a petulant child and was treated with indulgence by his overlords so long as he did not make serious attempts to overthrow the yoke.

His treacherous and unstable disposition, however, involved him in a serious conflict with the British which led to the dissolution of the Maratha Empire both in name and in fact. The

¹⁰ *The Marquess Wellesley*, Rev. W. H. Hutton, Clarendon Press, 1893, p. 86.

¹¹ *The Marquess Wellesley*, W. M. Torrens, p. 256.

murder of Gangadhar Shastri at Pandharpur, a great pilgrim centre in Maharashtra, on July 20, 1815, suspected to have been perpetrated at the instigation of the Peshwa's favourite, Trimbakji Dengle, prompted the Company Government to take a serious view of the crime, as the Shastri had come to Poona on official business on behalf of the Baroda Darbar under British guarantee. The Peshwa's foolish and desperate acts after the event, like his attack on the British Residency at Poona, sealed his fate.

Abdication was forced upon him in June 1818 and in the following year he was safely lodged at distant Bithur, on the banks of the river Ganga, with an annuity of eight lakhs of rupees. He lived longer than all his distinguished predecessors and died on January 28, 1851, at the age of 76, with none to spare a tear over his exit. The great scholar-statesman, Mountstuart Elphinstone, played an outstanding part in hastening the downfall of Bajirao. As Resident at Poona, he had seen that the office of Peshwa was full of danger to the British Raj and had strongly advocated its abolition. Satara, the place of residence of Shivaji's descendants, was raised to the status of a principality on the ashes of Poona as a sop to Maratha sentiment, but none took the gesture seriously since it was believed that, having killed the bird, the British were now offering its plumage. Sir T. E. Colebrooke, Elphinstone's biographer, had no doubt in his mind that British intervention in the Maratha affairs was an unmitigated act of aggression.

The Gaekwars and the Bhosles of Nagpur never proved formidable to the British. The ruler of Baroda, who had suffered much at the hands of the Peshwa, saw little reason to remain in the confederacy which, after the departure of the energetic Peshwas, had in fact become "a curious and baffling political puzzle". Baroda found its new position of "subordinate isolation" most congenial to its interests. Raghoji Bhosle was, however, made of sterner stuff, but his defeat at Adgaum (Argaon) on November 29, 1803, during the hostilities that followed the signing of the Treaty of Bassein by the Peshwa, convinced him about the futility of further resistance to the foreigners. The Treaty of Devgaon, concluded on December 17, 1803, reduced him to the position of a second-class ruler. After

him, his impetuous nephew, Mudhoji Appasaheb, provoked a conflict with the English, which ended in his defeat and deposition in November 1817 and the installation of the ten-year old son of Raghoji's daughter on the vacant *gadi*. During Dalhousie's regime the State of Nagpur was merged into the British Indian territory in 1854 "without any audible murmur of discontent" from the people.

Gwalior was, however, a different proposition. It had a large, well-appointed, drilled and disciplined army which prided on its strength and excellent turn-out, having never been beaten in the field. It was largely the creation of the celebrated De Boyne under Mahadji's direction. After his retirement from the Gwalior service in 1796, his place was taken by General Perron, a small man. It was a fatal weakness of Sindhia's forces that they were largely officered by Europeans, including Englishmen. The Governor-General, who knew that war with Sindhia would not be a tame affair, successfully employed what in modern parlance are called fifth column methods by exhorting the European officers of the Gwalior Army to desert their master. Perron, who cared more for his hoarded wealth than for his honour, and many of his staff secretly abandoned their battalions on the day previous to the outbreak of the first battle, namely, August 29, 1803. Despite this grave disability, Sindhia's men fought like lions, compelling General Lake to admit: "I never was in so severe a business in my life, or anything like it, and I pray to God I may never be in such a situation again." His victory would have been "extremely doubtful" if the Gwalior troops had been led by experienced officers. Nevertheless, General Wellesley's victory over Sindhia's troops at Assai in September 1803 and over those of Bhosle at Adgaum in November, gave the British a decided military advantage over the Marathas. This fact was confirmed by his capture of the hill-fort of Gavilgad (Gawalighur) in December and by Lake's successes in the North, especially in the Battle of Laswadi (Laswaree) in November against Gwalior.

The disintegration of the State and its ruler was rapid after his reverses on the battlefield. A trivial-minded man, Daulatrao found it impossible to reduce his refractory subordinates to submission. Within two months of signing the Treaty of Surji

Anjangaon on December 30, 1803, he appealed to Malcolm, the British Resident, to give him the protection of a British military force. Evidently, the scion of the great Mahadji Sindhia found independence an intolerable burden! Lord Hastings, who carried many stages forward Wellesley's work of conquest, had no real idea of Daulatrao's pusillanimity and, anticipating danger from him and Holkar, decided to "rivet shackles" upon both. Accusing Sindhia of collusion with the Pindari freebooters, the Governor-General forced him to sign a treaty in November 1817 which extinguished whatever remnants of sovereignty he might have been allowed to retain by the earlier agreement. He was now fully and appropriately admitted to the rapidly growing Order of idle and irresponsible rulers.

The moral presented by Indore's role in the Maratha War is equally instructive. Yeshwantrao Holkar was a gifted soldier—bold, resourceful and indomitable,—whose abilities compared favourably with those of the ablest Generals on the British side. He was also animated by a genuine spirit of patriotism, but he was cruel, capricious and vindictive. His relentless feud with Sindhia and the Peshwa played no small part in pushing the Maratha Empire into the precipice. The war that broke out on the issue of the Treaty of Bassein, had presented a golden opportunity to Holkar to make common cause with his countrymen, but such statesmanship was beyond him. He watched with supreme unconcern the armies of Nagpur and Gwalior being engaged separately by the British and defeated in detail. It was only after everything was lost that he entered the fray. "My country and property," declared this remarkable man, "are upon the saddle of my horse and please God, to whatever side the reins of the horses of my brave warriors may be tuned, the whole of the country in that direction shall come into my possession." He threatened General Wellesley that "countries of many hundred *coss*" would be overrun and plundered by him if the British ventured to cross his path.

Whatever his other deficiencies, and they were many, Holkar was not an idle boaster. Adopting the Parthian techniques of warfare and discarding the acquired methods, he baffled the enemy by his superb strategy and generalship. Colonels Murray and Monson, who were mortally afraid of him, showed a marked

disinclination to face him. Describing Monson's defeat at Holkar's hands as a "disgraceful and disastrous event", Lake lamented that there had not been a finer detachment than the one destroyed by Holkar. "I have lost," the General cried, "five battalions and six companies, the flower of the army, and how they are to be replaced at this day, God only knows. I have to lament the loss of some of the finest young men and most promising in the Army."¹² This was the worst defeat in the British Indian military annals and the "tragic story is made more revolting by the bitterness and ungenerosity of the warfare".¹³ Lake, who wrote these melancholy words, was himself overwhelmed by a major tragedy before the walls of Bharatpur, where he "blundered terribly" and lost over three thousand men in an attempt to capture the fort from the Maharaja. The Maratha war was most popular. "Every chief," writes Edward Thompson, "was sympathetic to his (Holkar's) cause; Sikhs, Rohillas, the Begum Samroo, even the Muslim leaders and princes of Delhi and the surrounding regions, were plotting to join in one effort to expel the British."¹⁴

But no such combination materialised. In fact, Daulatrao Sindhia considered it perfectly honourable to report to the British when Holkar applied to him for help when his fortunes began to flag. Yeshwantrao belatedly realised that it was impossible for any single power in India to face the British successfully. He was severely defeated at Dig in November 1804 and fled to the Punjab for safety. He returned later and signed the Treaty of Rajghat on December 24, 1805, which levelled him down to the position of a British feudatory. This man, who never knew the value of concerted action, died a lunatic on October 20, 1811. His friendship for Amir Khan, the notorious Pindari brigand, whom he called his brother, allows us an interesting insight into his character. After his death, the Pathan faction at Indore, headed by Amir Khan's brother-in-law, forced the State into a war with the British. The Maratha army was soundly beaten at Mahidpur, the only redeeming feature on Holkar's side being the display of courage on the battlefield by the eleven-year old

¹² *The Marquess Wellesley*, W. H. Hutton, p. 104.

¹³ *The Making of the Indian Princes*, Edward Thompson, Oxford, 1943, p. 109.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 111.

ruler. The Treaty of Mandasore, concluded on January 6, 1818, imposed heavy sacrifices on the minor prince who was forced to cede territories in order to accommodate Amir Khan and his brother-in-law. By this arrangement, the two infamous bandits were raised to the status of princes as the Nawabs of Tonk and Jaora. The new political disposition in that region also served "as a counterpoise to the preponderating influence of the Hindus, who otherwise would have been sole masters of the whole country".¹⁵

It is evident from this narrative that the British dreaded the Marathas as their most powerful adversaries. Even four years after Bajirao II had signed away his country's independence, Metcalfe felt constrained to write that there were in India not more than two Powers, and they were the British and the Marathas. Why did these brave people go down instead of rising to the heights of masterful leadership? Their adversaries were not supermen and they were certainly not free from inefficiency and ineptitude. It is indeed impossible to challenge the verdict that "the pretensions of the English power in India were really out of all proportion to its military strength. Again and again a combination of enemies might have brought about disaster and even ruin".¹⁶

Disunity was thus at the root of Maratha downfall. To this grave infirmity, many others were added. First, the high moral principles that governed the conduct of the Marathas under Shivaji's leadership, suffered a steady dilution until they finally disappeared towards the end of their hegemony. The excesses of their troops in Bengal and elsewhere, the vandalism of a Brahmin commander at Shringeri, a great monastery in Mysore State, and Holkar's spoliation of some of the famous pilgrim centres in his own Maharashtra, are instances to show that the Maratha polity gradually came under the domination of desperately wicked men. Secondly, the bond of language and religion that had transformed the Maratha armed forces into a powerful national army was weakened with the extension of their authority to larger areas involving a radical change both

¹⁵ *A Narrative of the Political and Military Transactions of British India under the Administration of Marquess of Hastings*, Henry T. Prinsep, John Murray, 1820, p. 429.

¹⁶ *The Marquess Wellesley*, W. H. Hutton, p. 134.

in the methods of recruitment and in the techniques of warfare. The defection of Perron and his men proved that too much reliance could not be placed on mercenary armies. Thirdly, the ignorance of the Maratha leaders was as massive as the witlessness of some of them. Nana Phadnis' knowledge of Indian geography was amazingly faulty and inadequate. While there was no desire on the part of Indians to look beyond the tip of their nose, the British made the most thorough and diligent study of nearly all aspects of their national life. Men like Major Kirkpatrick at the Nizam's Court and Colonel William Palmer at Poona assiduously Indianized their habits so that they could serve their country with greater understanding and insight. In Poona, Mountstuart Elphinstone watched every movement of Bajirao and at Lucknow Baillie received hourly reports of the Nawab's doings. British officers like Malcolm, Munro, Metcalfe, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Close and Tod worked like Trojans for the greater glory of their motherland, while most of their Indian counterparts laboured with equal diligence for the downfall of their country. Land-locked and dominated by feudalism and stagnation, they found themselves pitted against adversaries who were endowed with a wide ranging vision and varied experience. Lastly, the Government of the Marathas was chronically indigent. There was a disconcerting regularity in the lamentations of the Peshwas about the bankruptcy of their resources. The problem of paying for new and expensive armour never ceased to plague them. Compared with theirs, the sinews of war at the disposal of the British were almost unlimited. Even so, the really decisive advantage which the foreign Power enjoyed was Indian disunity.

Wellesley, whose wars with the Marathas, caused his downfall, was an ardent annexationist who gained large territories without striking a blow. In 1799, Tanjore, a Maratha State in the south, and Surat, the oldest English settlement in India under the government of a Nawab, were annexed, while two years later, Carnatic, the land of Muhammad Ali's nefarious activities, came into the Company Government's possession. Farruckabad, a small principality in the fertile tract of the Doab, also fell into Wellesley's lap.

This energetic man, who fought for the destruction of the benighted principalities with the zeal of an evangelist, failed to absorb Oudh, though he had set his heart upon it. From the time it came under the influence of the British by the treaty of August 1765, the State knew no peace. An army of European fortune-hunters fell upon it and sucked its life-blood like leeches.¹⁷ The rulers, whose ancestor was a foreigner, were both helpless and unconcerned about the plight of the people. Writing to Dundas in May 1795, Sir John Shore declared that Asaf-ud-Daula's dominions were "in the precise condition to tempt rebellion". Every consideration of justice and prudence demanded that this Sick Man of India should be sent into oblivion. That indeed was Wellesley's intention, but he failed to realise it due to his superciliousness and bungling tactics. By a treaty, concluded in November 1801, he, however, succeeded in mulcting from the Nawab Vazier Rohilkhand and the Lower Doab, a fertile territory which yielded an annual revenue of one crore and thirty-five lakhs of rupees.

Oudh survived the expansionist ardour of Wellesley and Lord Hastings entirely because of the embarrassing loyalty of its rulers. In spite of all the humiliations and losses that were inflicted upon him by Wellesley, Sadat Ali proclaimed that life would be intolerable for him "unless he always dined and breakfasted in company with the Lord". Lord Hastings' Nepalese War was virtually financed by him out of a profound sense of gratitude to His Lordship for treating him like a gentleman! Such unique devotion to the Raj deserved its own reward which came to the Nawab in 1819 in perhaps the strangest manner. A man, who could not exercise his jurisdiction even in his own palace, was encouraged to dignify himself with the title of King! The Moghul pageant at Delhi was furious at the spurious elevation of his subordinate. The resulting feud between the two families gave immense satisfaction to the Governor-General. Meanwhile, the State's administration continued to fester like a decaying wound in the Indian body politic till it was annexed to the British Raj in February 1856.

In corruption and inefficiency, Hyderabad was second only to Oudh and yet it survived the tide of British conquest by

¹⁷ *The Marquess Wellesley*, W. H. Hutton, p. 67.

practising the art of pliancy and submission to the Paramount Power with greater success. "The Nizam," wrote the future Duke of Wellington in 1806, "by the result of an unfortunate state of hostility with the Marathas, which ended in battle and a peace, or rather capitulation, concluded at Kharda in 1795, had fallen from the state of a great and leading power in Hindustan to that of a tributary to the Marathas. His ministers were appointed by the Marathas, his army was disbanded" ¹⁸ By judiciously rendering help to his overlords on all occasions when they were hardpressed for allies, he not only managed to secure a long lease of life for his dominion but also to gain large additions to it. In fact, his realm was a hotch-potch of three distinct linguistic units which he governed with singular incompetence. Himself a pitiless exploiter, he was helpless in preventing the spoliation of his people by foreign harpies who went to his State in different guises and under different pretexts, Palmer and Company being noteworthy among them. It was acknowledged that toleration of gross misgovernment in Hyderabad was "discreditable" to the suzerain Power, but no effective action was taken to curb it, especially after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 when the value of the Nizam and the rest of his Order to the stability of the Raj became most evident.

Wellesley, as we have seen, was by far the boldest expansionist whose military conquests paved the way for Lord Hastings' far-reaching political settlements. There was, however, little in common between these two men either in outlook or temperament. Proud, pontifical and overbearing, Wellesley believed in using the sledge-hammer where a mallet would have done. A more balanced person, Lord Hastings unobtrusively concluded the largest number of treaties by bringing the States of Rajasthan, Bhopal, Saugor and many other principalities within the orbit of British paramountcy. By 1818, the whole of India, with the exception of Sind and the Punjab, came under the control of a single and well-organised government.

There is no "natural frontier" to a conquering Power and in 1818 the British had certainly not reached it in the Indian quadrilateral. Apart from their expansionist zeal, it was impos-

¹⁸ *The Making of British India*, Ramsay Muir, Manchester University Press, 1917, p. 206.

sible for them to ignore the compulsions of geography. The injunction of the Act of 1784 against territorial expansion was no longer valid and was replaced by the declaration of 1841 which prescribed that all legitimate opportunities for the extension of the Company Government's jurisdiction should be welcomed. The old hesitations, arising out of the fear of possible international complications, no longer existed, especially after 1814 when both France and Holland, one-time contenders for Indian sovereignty, conceded Britain's claim to that distinction. The Moghul also ceased to be an impediment in the way of an open assertion of British paramountcy over this country, as none cared for him now.

Sind, with its warring Amirs and its excellent strategic location as a jumping-off ground for an offensive against Afghanistan, offered an irresistible attraction to the annexationist. The seaport at Karachi and the navigable river Indus (Sindhu) provided almost unlimited opportunities for commercial enterprise. The political settlement imposed on the Amirs in 1839 by Lord Auckland was a prelude to the absorption of the entire province. To secure this end, Colonel James Outram, a competent and fair-minded officer, was replaced by Sir Charles Napier, the "congenial representative" of demands that were bound to produce war. Napier's easy victory over the Amirs at Miani and Hyderabad (Sind) in February and March 1843 led to the annexation of the province to the British territory. The transaction was roundly condemned by Mountstuart Elphinstone and Outram, the conqueror, Napier, himself calling it "a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality".

The annexation of Burma followed the familiar pattern of the wolf calling the lamb aggressor and then devouring it. In the first Burmese War, which broke out in February 1824 over disputed frontiers, the operations were not as simple as a trial of strength between these two creatures. The Burmese had an inspired military commander in Bandula whose armies inflicted heavy casualties on the British Indian troops. British attempts to capture Rangoon by sea ended in complete disaster and both sides were thankful when peace came with the signing of the Treaty of Yandaboo in February 1826. But the treaty did not promote an enduring Anglo-Burmese friendship. During Dal-

housie's regime, Pegu was annexed in 1852, while in 1886 Lord Dufferin's Government took over the entire territory of independent Burma. On both these occasions the flag followed the trade.

There only remained the Land of Five Rivers to complete the round of British conquests in the Indian peninsula. The British had wisely refrained from making any such attempt during the life-time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh whose esteem and friendship for them they sincerely reciprocated. The Maharaja was a man of genius and was in fact the last Indian soldier-statesman of a disappearing era. He welded the warring Sikhs into a well-knit and powerful military fraternity, but he never allowed narrow sectarianism to obscure his vision. He believed in talent and encouraged it, no matter in whom he found it, so that he had in his civil and military government Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and European officers, all of whom served him with exemplary devotion. He presided over a large and turbulent realm, extending from the Khyber to the Sutlej and embracing the territory of Kashmir, which he governed with least violence and great justice. By the treaty of Amritsar, concluded with the British in April 1809, the Maharaja had undertaken not to extend his empire towards the cis-Sutlej States which were claimed by them as their allies. The Treaty remained in operation till his death in 1839. It was of great advantage to the Company Government since the Sikh State, apart from its military strength, served as a useful buffer between the British Indian provinces and the turbulent Power beyond the north-west frontier, from where so many invasions of this country had taken place in the past.

With the death of the Maharaja, the amity between the Sikhs and the British ended. The leaderless State, which came under the sway of the army, invited conquest from its powerful neighbour. Calcutta on its part suddenly became aware of the danger of having two sovereign States on Indian soil and in the name of strengthening its outposts, massed British Indian troops on the Punjab border. As a precautionary measure against internal disturbances, the large Gwalior army was demobilized in 1843. British intentions towards the Sikh State were plainly aggressive, for, as Sir Alfred Lyall so guardedly concedes, "there

had been some inopportune frontier disputes, which had embittered the Lahore Government, not altogether unreasonably, against the English".¹⁹ The Governor-General, Sir Henry Hardinge (1844-48), was an accomplished soldier and his careful military preparations bore the desired results. The armies of the two Governments clashed at Sobraon on February 10, 1846, when the Sikhs went down after fighting stubbornly.

The political settlement that followed conformed to the familiar pattern and was ratified by the Treaty of Lahore on March 9. An infant Prince, Dulip Singh, was installed on the Lahore *gadi*, with Sir Henry Lawrence as the virtual protector of the State. The new arrangement did not, however, work well which induced Hardinge's successor, Lord Dalhousie (1848-56), to adopt the straightforward course of annexation. There was no outstanding Indian leader to oppose his move and the only man who could do so—Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu—was seasonably won over with the gift of Kashmir.²⁰ Taking advantage of the uprising of the Governor of Multan in April 1848, Dalhousie forced a war on the helpless State. The Sikhs fought with their customary valour and desperation at Ramnagar and Chillianwalla, the battle honours being shared equally by both sides. The opposing armies fought another action at Gujrat which ended in the defeat and surrender of the Sikhs at discretion in March 1849. The splendid heritage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was thus destroyed within one decade of his death.

Dalhousie's regime is notable for his peaceful annexations. He rendered the greatest service to India by liquidating Oudh whose continued existence would have caused, as it did in the case of Hyderabad, a serious problem to the country at the time of its independence. The absorption of Nagpur, Satara, Jhansi and many other principalities, including Jaitpur, Sambalpur, into the British Indian territories by applying the doctrine of lapse was both justified and welcome. But in his dealings with the princely States, the Governor-General enunciated no new political principles, nor did he adopt measures that could, without falsifying history, be construed as being bolder than those

¹⁹ *The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India*, Sir Alfred Lyall, p. 315.

²⁰ *Asia and Western Dominance*, K. M. Panikkar, p. 81.

enforced by Lords Wellesley and Hastings. Ramsay Muir writes that Dalhousie would "probably not have hesitated to abolish all the dependent States and bring the whole of India under a single, just, efficient and sympathetic rule",²¹ but this claim has no basis in fact.

Dalhousie did not invent the doctrine of lapse. As far back as 1834, the Court of Directors had laid down that, wherever it was optional for the Indian Government to give or withhold its assent to adoptions in the States, "the indulgence should be the exception and not the rule". Before the coming of Dalhousie, several States like Mandvi and Kolaba had been abolished on the basis of this directive. Again, the annexation of Oudh in February 1856 was undoubtedly a memorable event, but the Governor-General's own part in it was not particularly energetic. It was only the firmness of the home authorities that rendered the annexation a *fait accompli*.

Misrule was rightly claimed as the reason for such drastic action, but oppression and corruption were not the especial infirmities of Oudh. It would have been logical and it would certainly have redounded to the honour and prestige of the British Government if all States sharing such reproach had been impartially taken over. In that event, there would have been no Hyderabad, but Dalhousie was content with merely obtaining the cession of Berar to meet the cost of maintaining a British Indian contingent in the State. What he himself saw in Hyderabad was by no means edifying and yet in his Minute of May 27, 1851, he made the surprising observation that so long as the evils of the Nizam's Government were "confined within its own limits, and affect only his own subjects, the Government of India must observe religiously the obligation of its own good faith". It is impossible to believe that these views can be reconciled with the arguments that were urged in defence of Oudh's annexation. Dalhousie's doctrine of limited liability, as enunciated by him in the case of Hyderabad, was opposed to the whole range of historical facts and to the numerous pronouncements of the statesmen that preceded him.

Lastly, his division of the princely States into "sovereign" and "dependent" principalities was most fanciful, because it

²¹ *The Making of British India*, Ramsay Muir, pp. 339-40.

flatly contradicted the time-honoured dictum that sovereignty is indivisible. As will be discussed in a separate chapter, the Indian States were *sui generis* and were not treated as independent entities. The origin of most of them was either obscure or unedifying. Sir William Lee-Warner wrote that British protection was extended to numerous States "over which some upstart, some military adventurer, or some rebellious subject of a former dynasty, had acquired rule by violence".²² Any rational classification of this medley was, therefore, impossible and yet Dalhousie attempted it by exempting Karauli, a petty Rajput State, from the operation of the doctrine of lapse by treating it as an "independent" principality. In any case, no such untenable demarcation was made by Hardinge who wrote in 1844 to Holkar, the ruler of a "sovereign" State, that it would be annexed to the British Raj if it failed "to descend to the heirs male of his body".²³ Dalhousie was, therefore, an extremely cautious and conservative annexationist. He himself clinched the issue when he wrote in July 1857: "I never advised annexing any principality unless it lapsed naturally for want of heirs or was forfeited for misconduct."²⁴

Nothing that is said in criticism of Dalhousie's States policy can, however, detract from his true greatness. He was an enthusiastic administrative innovator and gave full play to his zeal for modernism, now that the whole country had come under the sway of a single authority. He introduced India to the spacious world of railways and telecommunications and of science and technology. The adoption of the western system of education and of English as the medium of instruction not only brought the country closer to a dynamic civilization, but also strengthened the feeling of oneness among its people. The integration of India and the stimulation of nationalism among its inhabitants was an historical process and no single person could claim exclusive credit for its creation, but Dalhousie holds a prominent place among those who helped such a development. Sir Richard Temple, who had served under him,

²² *The Life of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, Sir William Lee-Warner, Vol. II, Macmillan, 1904, p. 148.

²³ *The Marquess of Dalhousie*, Sir William Hunter, Oxford, 1890, pp. 145-146.

²⁴ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, p. 587

declared: "As an administrator, he has never been surpassed and seldom equalled by any of the illustrious men whom England has sent forth to govern India." The fateful happenings during the regime of his successor proved beyond doubt that India had begun to move steadily towards a new destiny.

5. THE END OF AN ERA

THE British Empire in India was not like any of the numerous empires that preceded it. It remained alien from the date of its establishment till its exit and yet its achievements were remarkable. The British assumed sovereign powers in this country when it was heading for anarchy and saved it from the dreadful plight of disintegration. Their gift to India was indeed inestimable. For the first time after many centuries, the whole country was brought within the frame of a single government which succeeded in establishing stable conditions of peace and tranquillity. It also combated some of the obnoxious social evils, though with great diffidence, and helped Indians to gain free access to the civilization of Europe. English education was of inestimable value in stimulating a revivalist movement both in the social and political life of the country and became the basis for the *emotional integration* of its people,—a term about which we hear so much today. In short, British rule assisted India to rediscover herself.

The establishment of the rule of law was Britain's greatest contribution to India. The disastrous failure of the Marathas to assume the responsibilities of government after the disappearance of the Moghul rule gave a great impetus to lawlessness in the country. Large bands of armed and mounted men, known as Pindaris, sometimes numbering forty thousand, roamed the country, pillaging towns and villages and pitilessly murdering men, women and children during their plundering expeditions. Lord Hastings' determined campaign against them rooted out the evil so that the emancipated populace sincerely blessed the British with the invocation: "May your rule last for ever!" Bentinck's regime became similarly noteworthy for the extermination of the hangmen of the highways, known as *thags* or *thugs*, who had long been terrorising peaceful and defenceless travellers.

In the administrative domain, the country received all the appurtenances of a modern government, with the exception of popular legislatures. Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773 was

certainly not a well constructed governing machinery. The dependence of the Governor-General on the capricious vote of the Council, the conflict of jurisdictions between the Council and the Supreme Court, and the want of a supreme authority nearer than England to arbitrate in the disputes that arose from time to time in the Indian administration, were some of the major defects of the Act which hampered efficient government. Pitt's India Act of 1784 was an improvement on the earlier statute, since it armed the Governor-General with powers to override the majority of his Council and to act on his own responsibility. But, by setting up a Board of Control and clothing it with extensive powers of superintendence and control over the Indian Government, despite the existence of the Board of Directors, Pitt's legislation gave rise to dual government, with all its cumbrous and dilatory procedure and its elaborate system of checks and counterchecks. Though somewhat modified by subsequent Charter Acts, these defects remained until 1858 when the Indian Government came under the direct jurisdiction of the Crown of England.

It is possible to levy even graver objections to the British Indian statutes which were not at all model instruments of government, but in their time they served a useful purpose. The establishment of an executive and a judiciary endowed with a great measure of integrity and authority, was no small gain, especially at a time when might threatened to become the sole arbiter of India's destiny. Law, administered by a hierarchy of courts and enforced by a well-organised executive, became both the foundation and the framework of the Indian social order. The doctrine that no person could be arrested or imprisoned without the due process of the law and the concept of personal liberty, enshrined in the writ of *habeas corpus*, were both significant and welcome innovations in the Indian polity. Perhaps, for the first time in India's annals, it was the *government* that became more important than the man or men that headed it. None could claim immunity from the laws of the land and none could escape the consequences of defying them. In a country long accustomed to the monarchical form of government, not infrequently capricious and oppressive in its operation, the concept that there was no authority higher than the law was undoubtedly a revelation. It is true that the Indian text-book

writers insisted that the ruler should be an eminence of model behaviour, but, as Dr. Beni Prasad rightly points out, "a limited monarchy in which the sovereign is only a dignified part of the constitution would have been incomprehensible to Hindu writers".¹ The belief that the king was the fountain-head of all authority received a further fillip under Muslim rule. Akbar, a wise and benevolent ruler, was occasionally guilty of primeval cruelty, as during his attack on Chitor in Rajasthan, but it was inconceivable that he could be brought to justice for his excesses. In contrast, Warren Hastings, to whom Britain owed so much for his work in India, was forced to face a relentless Parliamentary investigation for acts that were no more serious than misdemeanours. The Government of India ceased to be personal with the advent of the British rule.

The British were, however, both tardy and timid in dealing with the country's social problems. Practices like *sati* or widow-burning and infanticide were abominations that were wholly alien to the essentially mild and benign religion of the Hindus. Many British rulers realised the need for suppressing them, but recoiled from action for fear of provoking the opposition of orthodoxy. With the ground prepared for bold measures by men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Lord William Bentinck abolished the odious custom of *sati* in December 1819 and thus deservedly won the applause of social reformers as a courageous administrator.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833) was an outstanding Indian of the nineteenth century and the first Indian prophet of modernism. He was born in a high caste family but refused to allow his mind to be anchored to orthodoxy. He founded the Brahmo Samaj in the hope of making it a universal house of prayer. His emancipated mind saw wisdom and spiritual solace enshrined in all the great religions of the world and he proved the catholicity of his outlook by writing a book in admiration of Christ. He had many Christian friends, including missionaries, some of whom, however, mistaking his progressive outlook for indifference to his own faith, had the temerity to suggest his apostasy, with offers of material prosperity! He promptly showed them their place by proving the supreme excellence of his ancestral

¹ *Theory of Government in Ancient India*, Dr. Beni Prasad, The Indian Press, 1927, p. 358.

religion and by mercilessly exposing their own gross ignorance. His mission was not to decry his own heritage, but to enlarge and enrich it by accepting all that was good and great in other civilizations. He was, as the great French savant, Romain Rolland, has observed, "an independent theist, a rationalist and a moralist".²

Roy was also a great educationist. India, as the eminent Indologist, Professor F. W. Thomas, observes, has an unbroken tradition of learning from a hoary past, but political instability and the absence of royal patronage had condemned the national system of education to stagnation and decay. Discerning administrators like Lords Minto and Hastings had noticed that institutions run on old lines contained "no embers capable of being fanned into Life". In March 1824, Mountstuart Elphinstone deplored in his Minute on Education that British rule had "dried up the fountains of native talent" and that "even the actual learning of the nation" was likely to be lost unless effective measures were taken to stop the deterioration.³ But the point at issue was which system of education suited India best in her changed condition. In the battle royal that was waged between the "Anglicists" and the "Orientalists" on this issue, the latter were worsted as much by the wind of change as by the strong support which their opponents received from the Government and the missionaries and from a certain class of educationists.

From the first, the cause of the Orientalists, like Wilson and Prinsep, was doomed to fail. Indians themselves wanted a change. As far back as 1814 Lord Hastings had noted that "the disposition to learn English is strong among the natives". A knowledge of the language of the Company Sarkar was considered essential if Indians were to make a successful career in its territories. A great impetus was given to this movement by the Charter Act of 1833 which promised Indians equal opportunities for "holding any place, office or employment under the Company". Besides, wealthy and powerful men in England, including Charles Grant, an influential Director of the Company who

² *The Life of Ramakrishna*, Romain Rolland, Advita Ashrama, 1944, p. 103.

³ *Selections from the Minutes and other official writings of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay*, Edited by George W. Forrest, 1884, pp. 101-102.

had made a large fortune in India, and William Wilberforce, an ardent crusader for Christianity, had persuaded themselves that the social ills of this country could be best cured through the ministrations of teachers and preachers. Grant and Wilberforce crusaded tirelessly for the inclusion in the renewed Charters to the Company what is known as the Pious Clause in order to enable missionaries to proceed to India and to undertake proselytization under official patronage. The suggested preamble to the revised clause provided for the granting of sufficient facilities "by law" to persons desirous of accomplishing the "benevolent designs" of weaning the Indian people from their ancestral faith and from their natural way of life. The influential Clapham Sect was most persistent in demanding such a *carte blanche*.⁴

William Carey, an ex-cobbler, an ardent Baptist, a master of many languages and a great educationist, presented a *fait accompli* to the Orientalists by building up a great educational centre on western lines at Serampore, a Danish settlement, sixteen miles north of Calcutta. David Hare, described as "a man of a rude exterior and an uncultivated mind—by trade a watch-maker", joined the fray on behalf of New Learning and, in collaboration with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Sir Hyde East, the Chief Justice of Bengal, founded the Vidyalaya which eventually blossomed into the Presidency College of Calcutta. Hare was a remarkable man, whose zeal for the Western system of education was, like that of Roy, entirely secular.

The tables were finally turned on the traditionalists when both the home and the Indian Governments openly opted for New Learning. Writing to the Bombay Government on February 18, 1829, the Court of Directors expressed their "anxious desire" to afford Indians "the means of instruction in European science, and of access to the literature of the civilized Europe". Such opportunities, the letter continued, would qualify the people of this country "for higher situations in the civil government of India than any to which natives have hitherto been eligible". William Bentinck, the Governor-General, declared in his Minute of March 7, 1835, that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appro-

⁴ *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*, Ainslie Embree, G. Allen & Unwin, 1962, pp. 152, 270.

priated for the purposes of education would be best employed on English education alone". Macaulay's Minute of the same year was remarkable, not for propounding any new arguments in favour of the Western system, but for its arrogant attack on Indian learning and literature. This man, who knew little about Indian culture and civilization and who was roundly criticized by Lord Acton for his superficiality in matters outside the range of his own specialized studies, wrote that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia". Perhaps, the best answer to this outburst is the comment of Sir Philip Hartog who says: "Macaulay was totally ignorant of the treasures of Sanskrit learning, and his policy towards Sanskrit and Arabic was in some ways retrograde."⁵

It was the superficial jibes of men like Macaulay, Charles Grant, Wilberforce and a host of others, including those of the semi-literate missionaries, that largely decided the educational policy of the British Government in India. English became the medium of instruction from the secondary to the University stage and a sound knowledge of the language was regarded as a passport to success. The establishment of universities in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta in 1857, modelled on the original conception of the University of London, firmly set the course of education in this country. Such wholesale importation of an exotic system was demonstrably undesirable, but at the time of its introduction the philosophy of evolution was still in its infancy. The concept that the human mind and alien institutions demand a careful and sympathetic study, besides a respectful attitude towards them, before they can be properly understood, received little appreciation from the advocates of New Learning. They had certainly not studied the mind of India, its nature or its previous history before committing her irrevocably to a particular system of education. A system that attempted a careful and judicious synthesis of the best that the West and the East offered would have avoided many of the glaring deficiencies which the Indian education has inherited, but no such attempt was made.

⁵ *Some Aspects of Indian Education: Past and Present*, Sir Philip Hartog, Oxford, 1939, p. 12.

Nevertheless, the Western system was of great help to India in promoting her national unity and in introducing her to world affairs. The English language became the *lingua franca* of her intellectuals, who began to develop a stronger consciousness of the oneness of their people and to entertain new ideals and ambitions about their motherland. They eagerly read the European literature of revolt, extolling liberty and freedom, proclaiming the sanctity of human personality, and openly preaching rebellion against tyranny and oppression. J. S. Mills' assertion that only the government of a people by itself had a meaning and a reality and that "such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist" was accepted as a political gospel of inviolable sanctity. Montesquieu's dictum that liberty is "diametrically the opposite of despotism", Rousseau's crusade against the usurpations of tyranny, and Bentham's belief that "the end and aim of a legislator should be the *happiness* of the people" were welcomed as precious blue-prints for a juster disposition of human affairs.

The new awakening that followed the introduction of Western education was widened by the printing press and the newspaper. The ability to read and write, which had long been an instrument of authority when it was confined to a few, became widespread as printing facilitated the production of books on a large scale. In the result, knowledge ceased to be the monopoly of the elect and was begun to be shared by an increasing number of people. The printed word and the unseen author acquired a new power and played no small part in stimulating new social and political urges and ambitions. This process of diffusing knowledge was speeded up by the newspapers and periodicals which not only supplied news but also sought to educate the mind of the reader. The press under British rule could not, of course, be entirely free and even liberal statesmen like Munro and Elphinstone did not look upon such freedom as a desirable proposition, although Metcalfe chose to take a different view. In fact, in 1835 he liberated the press from the shackles imposed on it by John Adams' arbitrary regulations. Nevertheless, the fact that newspapers were allowed to circulate, presenting not only reports of the happenings in near and distant places, but also comments on a wide variety of subjects, was of great signifi-

cance. By creating and influencing public opinion, the newspapers served the great purpose of aiding national integration.

Besides giving the Indian people most of the essential means for becoming articulate and assertive, the British Government helped, through its scholarly and gifted servants, to revive world interest in the ancient wisdom of this country. India was, of course, known to other countries, since some millenniums before the coming of the British to her shores, but her downfall and isolation had encouraged fantastic notions about her and her people. The scholarly labours of men like William Jones, Charles Wilkins, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, Nathaniel Halhed and H. H. Wilson played no small part in correcting such misconceptions. It is indeed impossible to write about these scholars except in terms of unreserved admiration. A linguistic genius, Sir William Jones astonished Indian scholars by his mastery of Sanskrit, the country's classical language. He deeply loved the language and declared that it was of "wonderful structure—more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either". His translation of *Shakuntala* stands pre-eminent among his labours in the cause of winning wider recognition for the excellence and the vastness of the Indian classical language. In January 1784, he founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, with the encouragement of Warren Hastings and in collaboration with Wilkins and Halhed and thus gave a much-needed institutional basis for the study of India's ancient civilization. Jones was also an eminent jurist who strove to become the "Justinian of India".

Sir Charles Wilkins was another classical scholar who was affectionately described by Colebrooke as "Sanskrit mad". Jones generously conceded that he would not have learnt this language without Wilkins' aid. Wilkins translated the *Bhagavad Gita* or Song Celestial which carried an admirable Introduction by Warren Hastings. In his scholarly attainments, Hastings was perhaps not the peer of any of these stalwarts, but he yielded to none in his perception of India's true greatness. The *Gita*, he wrote, contained passages "elevated to a track of sublimity into which our habits of judgment will find it difficult to pursue them". He commended the book as "a performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction, almost unequalled".

Henry Colebrooke's essay on the Vedas, besides portraying the extent of his own learning and industry, enabled the world to appreciate the range of Indian thought embodied in the country's oldest literature. He rendered the massive Hindu Law more authentic by translating it from the source. Much good work had been done earlier by Nathaniel Halhed who had translated the Hindu Code into English from the Persian text when he was barely twenty-three years old. Halhed gave an impetus to modern philology by publicising the affinity between the Sanskrit words and those of Persian, Arabic, Latin and Greek, although similar researches had been made earlier by French Jesuits. Wilson was yet another brilliant Indologist who wrote profusely on a wide variety of subjects. He was a grammarian, a philosopher and a poet, who presented a formidable opposition to the missionaries of New Learning.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Europe ceased to be a stranger to Indian thought. The Germans undertook its study with their characteristic thoroughness. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), a pioneer of the Transcendental Movement that had just started in his country, wrote with ecstatic fervour about the Upanishads. "That incomparable book," he declared, "stirs the spirit to the very depths of the soul. From every sentence deep, original, and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. . . . It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death!"⁶ Johann Fichte (1762-1814), another German philosopher, affirmed his faith in the Indian philosophy and mysticism in identical language, while Nietzsche (1844-1900) asserted that the Laws of Manu were "a work which is spiritual and superior beyond comparison, which even to name in one breath with the Bible would be a sin against the Holy Ghost".⁷

Interest in Sanskrit studies was stimulated in England by the eminent Prof. Max Müller, who, besides writing weighty volumes on Indian scriptures and civilization, edited *The Sacred Books of the East* series which run into fifty volumes. A man of encyclopaedic knowledge, Max Müller edited the Rig Veda which he described as a work that would "hold its place in the permanent library of mankind". There was a similar permeation of

⁶ *Modern India and the West*, Edited by L. S. S. O'Malley, Oxford, 1941, pp. 544-45.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 545.

Indian thought in many other countries. In America, Emerson, Whittier and Thoreau welcomed it as a helpful contribution to the enlargement of the human mind. "As the Western world," says a writer, "awakened to the deep complexities of Buddhism and Hinduism, specialised terms like *Brahma*, *guru*, *karma*, *mahatma*, *nirvana*, *swami*, *vedanta* and *yoga* came into widening use; and their diffusion continues at an accelerating tempo today with the growing appeal of Oriental mysticism to the people of a troubled time." Though the language of this passage is not quite happy, it truly portrays the growing awareness on the part of the thinking men in the West that the glories of scientific achievement cannot replace the wisdom of the East.

While this is the bright side of the picture, India's political subordination to Britain caused incalculable harm to her economic interests. For the first time in its long history, the country was used as a colony, its vast resources being taken away to enrich another land and another people, without any arrangement for preventing its impoverishment. India was regarded as a vast reservoir of wealth, upon which individuals, institutions and governments could draw without restraint. It never occurred even to the most honourable and upright men that it was not exactly ethical to come to India with the avowed object of making a sizeable fortune and return home after staying in the country for as brief a period as possible. They did not choose to look at the plight of the Indian people, their miseries and many hungers. Lord Wellesley's view that the officials of the Company Government should be furnished with "the means of acquiring a competent fortune and of returning to their native country within a moderate period of service", claimed the magnitude of State policy, though it was not explicitly recorded. Macaulay could take home from India £25,000 in three and a half years.

Warren Hastings, it is claimed, was not a fortune-hunter, but his colleagues, Barwell and Francis, and his intimate friend Sir Elijah Impey, the Chief Justice of Calcutta, were. Barwell made an estimated pile of £80,000 after six years' service, despite the fact that both he and Francis were inveterate gamblers. We learn that the first named Councillor lost £40,000 in one sitting, while Francis lost half that amount in the same fashion. Impey, who caused the judicial murder of Maharaja Nanda Kumar in

order to please Warren Hastings, was "one of the most odious and contemptible of human beings".⁸ Like Paul Benfield, who was described as Count Rupee, he won the sobriquet of Justice Pulbandi or the Venerable Pulbandi for acquiring a large and lucrative contract in the district of Burdwan by irregular methods. According to Dennis Kincaid, Pigot, the popular Governor of Madras, received a bribe of £1,200,000 from the Nawab of Carnatic, while "the even more modest Wynch pocketed £200,000". It is a long and tiresome list, abounding in the counterparts of Clive and Benfield who carried home immense fortunes, to the detriment of the Indian people.

In this search for lucre, even priests, claiming to be servants of God, were in the forefront. Giving an account of the money made by some of them, Kaye writes with withering sarcasm: "It is needless to say that these fortunes could not have been realised out of the Company's allowances, even with the addition of the ministerial fees, which in India are liberally bestowed. These Churchmen must have devoted themselves to something more lucrative than the cure of souls and the burial of the dead. What it was may be readily conjectured."⁹ Nothing was a taboo to this grasping fraternity which found the lure of the gambling table irresistible. Indeed, the corrupting influence of money was all-pervasive and even the Archbishop of York could not resist it. He was profoundly grateful to Warren Hastings for allowing his son, Markham, Resident at Banaras, to make £30,000 a year in bribes.¹⁰ And yet in the eyes of these anointed men, Indians were barbarians!

Apart from the aggrandizement of individuals, members of the ruling and mercantile class of Britain looked upon India as their natural prey. There is no precise assessment of the volume of wealth that was transferred from this country to Britain, but William Digby's estimates are still quoted extensively as a fair appraisal of the magnitude of the drain. Taking into account the transfer of private fortunes and the trade surplus recorded in official statistics, Digby has arrived at the conclusion that "probably between Plassey and Waterloo a sum of

⁸ *The Story of Nuncomar and the Impeachment of Elijah Impey*, Sir James FitzJames Stephen, Macmillan, 1885, p. 33. Also see *The Trial of Maharaja Nanda Kumar*, H. Beveridge, Thacker & Spink, 1886, p. 117.

⁹ *The Administration of the East India Company*, Kaye, 1853, pp. 630-31.

¹⁰ *British Social Life in India*, Dennis Kincaid, George Routledge, 1938, p. 108.

£1,000 million was transferred from Indian hoards to English banks". On this basis, the flight of wealth from India during that period averaged £17.2 million a year. Some of the later writers have doubted the tenability of these figures, but their own estimates are demonstrably low.

India had to pay for everything. She had not only to meet the cost of an expensive civil and military administration and provide "lucrative and honourable offices" to a large number of the nationals of Britain, but had also to find money for her overlords' wars of expansion, both across the Indian frontiers and on other continents. As Chairman of the Select Committee of the House of Lords, Lord Ellenborough had great opportunities to study the financial transactions between the two countries before he came to India as Governor-General in 1842. After detailing the various financial burdens imposed on this country, he said that it was further required to transmit annually to Britain, without any return except in the small value of military stores, "a sum amounting to between two and three million sterling". The evidence tendered by Bagshaw, a Member of Parliament, before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1848 is even more revealing. More than three million sterling was taken annually from the Indian revenues for the payment of the Company's Home Charges "without any return whatever", while the fortunes accumulated in this country by private individuals contributed annually to a substantial increase in the capital of Britain. Bagshaw called attention to the "well-known fact that of the revenue raised in British India, the largest portion of it is from the land, by which its produce is necessarily burdened; this amounts to nearly thirteen and a half millions sterling".¹¹

Perhaps, the greatest disservice rendered by Britain to India was the destruction of her hand and household industries and crafts which had for centuries imparted an admirable stability to her national economy. But such acts of economic aggression were not committed against India alone. Britain lost the American Colonies precisely because she sought to annex for her exclusive use their vast resources without any consideration for the people of the land. Her famous Navigation Acts and other

¹¹ *India in the Victorian Age: An Economic History of the People*, Romesh Dutt, Kegan Paul, Trench, 1904, p. 125.

measures were patently discriminatory and unjust. "To a sagacious observer of colonial politics," says Lecky, "two facts were becoming evident. The one was that the deliberate and malignant selfishness of the English commercial legislation was digging a chasm between the mother-country and the Colonies which must inevitably, when the latter had become sufficiently strong, lead to separation." In Ireland, the repression was both political and economic. As Swift has pointed out in the most moving language, the Irishmen, besides being reduced to the lowest depths of poverty and degradation, were looked down upon as wild beasts "beyond the pale of the moral law". Supporting Swift's bitter complaint, Lecky adds: "The same complete subordination of Irish to English interests extended through the political system."¹²

It was absurd to hope that India, a distant country inhabited by a more alien people, could expect better treatment. The very *raison d'être* of British rule in this country was to gain absolute control over its riches and resources. In the result, Indian enterprises that stood in competition with the British industries could have no chance of survival. The world-famous Indian textiles which, for a considerable period, had nourished the East India Company's European trade, received a mortal blow when the arbiters of the country's destiny decided that the industry should not flourish. Its downfall was complete when Lancashire acquired immeasurable competitive strength from the Industrial Revolution. Ranged against the cheap, mass-produced goods of the Lancashire industry, which also enjoyed decisive political influence, the products of the widely-scattered and economically vulnerable handlooms had absolutely no chance. Britain, which had received 1,266,608 pieces of Indian fabrics in 1814, reduced her takings to 306,086 in 1835. In the same period, her exports of textiles to this country rose from 818,208 yards in 1814 to 51,777,277 yards in 1835. The expansion of Lancashire's overseas trade reached phenomenal proportions at the beginning of the twentieth century, her annual sendings of piecegoods amounting to the astounding figure of 7,000 million yards, which was far more than the total volume of cloth that enters the world market today. India, for long a leading exporter of textiles, was reduced

¹² *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, W E H. Lecky, Vol. II, pp. 10, 11, 217, 223.

to the miserable plight of becoming the foremost importer of this commodity, her takings being 2,532 million yards in 1907-08 and 3,159 million yards in 1913-14. Terrible consequences flowed from such a radical reversal of the time-honoured commercial trends. The great textile-producing centres in the country fell into ruin, the plight of Dacca in East Bengal, now in Pakistan, furnishing a glaring example. Other industries suffered a similar fate so that agriculture alone became India's major occupation and source of revenue.

But India could not expect to prosper even as an agricultural country. As the only source of revenue, the burden of meeting the growing demands of the Government fell almost entirely upon agriculture. In many provinces, the *ryotwari* settlement thoroughly impoverished the farmers who were often unable to pay the exorbitant land rent, enhanced from time to time by the Government. As far back as 1821, Munro recognised that an increase in the area of cultivation and a corresponding rise in the State revenue could be possible only if the prevailing rate of assessment was reduced. That indeed was the point of view of every informed commentator on the Indian land revenue system in the subsequent decades. Without relief, the poverty-stricken farmer fell an easy prey to the grasping money-lender. Commenting on the growing wretchedness and the economic slavery of the Indian peasantry, the nation's backbone, Captain Wingate, Revenue Survey Commissioner of Bombay, wrote in 1852 thus: "Do what he will, the poor *ryot* can never get rid of the principal. He toils that another may rest, and sows that another may reap."¹³

The growing impoverishment of the peasantry led to the subversion of the very basis of the country's agrarian economy. In large areas, the farmer came to believe that his salvation lay in raising what are called commercial crops. It was important that the wheels of the British industry should not slow down from inadequate supplies of raw materials. These and the foodgrains eventually became the only exportable commodities from India in order to finance the import of large varieties of consumer goods, many of which could either be produced inside the country or the use of which could well be dispensed with. The export of foodgrains when millions of the Indian people were chroni-

¹³ *History of the Freedom Movement*, Dr. Tara Chand, Vol. I, p. 348.

cally underfed was perhaps the most reprehensible aspect of the British economic policy towards this country. During the reign of Queen Victoria, acclaimed as the most prosperous one for the British Empire, there were numerous famines in this country, namely, in 1837, 1860, 1869, 1874 and 1877, the last one being long remembered with dread as a calamity of unprecedented severity.

Describing the growing enfeeblement of the Indian economy and of the Indian people, a writer says: "The workmen thrown out of employment by foreign competition, merely become a useless burden on the soil, and a perpetually recurring tax on the community, except so far as they are carried off by famine and fever."¹⁴ The railways played their own part in hastening this result. They were certainly of inestimable value in annihilating India's long distances and in promoting national consciousness, but they also became a lethal economic weapon in the hands of the British industrialists. They carried in bulk cheap machine-produced goods, including cloth, imported from Britain, to the remotest corners of the country, thus disorganising and eventually destroying the indigenous enterprises, and returned to the port towns laden with foodgrains and raw materials to be shipped abroad. The railways were introduced in India at a frightful cost, though the country's greatest need was irrigation, but they served one useful purpose. They and the telecommunications stimulated new economic trends in addition to those described earlier. India was viewed with great favour as providing a hospitable asylum for British capital which came in great volume during the Governor-Generalship of Dalhousie. An unanticipated result of the entrenchment of British enterprise on Indian soil was the introduction of modern technology into the country which stood Indian entrepreneurs in good stead in later years.

Impoverishment was not the only retribution that overtook India for the loss of her national independence. Like the Irish, her people were treated with contempt. Lord Wellesley described them as "vulgar, ignorant, rude, familiar and stupid",¹⁵ while Lord Cornwallis delivered the *coup de grace* to their

¹⁴ *The Economic Revolution of India*, A. K. Connell, Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883, p. 52.

¹⁵ *The Nabobs*, Dr. T. G. Spear, Oxford, 1932, p. 145

dignity and honour by stating it as an axiom that "every native of Hindustan is corrupt". In contrast, the British rulers of these fallen people were, according to Macaulay, the "hereditary aristocracy of mankind". It was considered perfectly natural to deny all rights and privileges to Indians in their own country. Rightly did Munro lament that, while *Pax Britannica* gave law and order and peace and security to India, it also reduced its inhabitants to "a mere animal state of thriving in peace". Discerning men realised that British rule could never be popular because, as Malcolm observed, "men may dread, but can never love or regard those who are continually humiliating them by the parade of superiority".¹⁶

It is true that the right of Indians to hold any place in the Company Government was expressly written into the statutes, as in the Charter Act of 1833, for example, but there was absolutely no intention on the part of the rulers to give effect to such promises. In its Despatch to the Government of India in December 1834, the Court of Directors recalled that Indians were debarred from certain offices, not because those positions belonged to the covenanted service, from which they were totally excluded, but because "the average amount of native qualifications can be presumed only to rise to a certain limit". Blissfully insensible to the enormity and the injustice of making such a sweeping condemnation of a great people, the wisemen of the Leadenhall Street brushed aside all solemn pledges by stating further that "the distinctions between situations allotted to the covenanted service, and all other situations of an official or public nature, will remain generally as at present".¹⁷ In other words, it was vain for Indians to expect any improvement in the "animal state" of their existence then or at any time in the future.

It was not realised then or even later that, just as man does not live by bread alone, a sensitive people do not regard security as the only desirable dispensation in their affairs. The ambition to serve noble causes, to achieve distinction and to win the plaudits of one's fellow-men warms the heart of every able and self-respecting person. But there were no such honourable

¹⁶ *A Memoir of Central India*, Sir John Malcolm, Vol. II, p. 438.

¹⁷ *The Administration of the East India Company*, John William Kaye, pp. 423-24.

openings for Indian nationals under British rule. The security State thus gathered under its surface a dangerous mass of discontent which was bound, sooner or later, to burst into a mighty conflagration. Dalhousie's ill-defined States' policy widened the area of unrest, with the princes and their dependent aristocracy becoming apprehensive about their future.

The storm, however, burst on the religious issue. The religious outlook of the British was certainly not morbid like that of the Portuguese, for example, but there was always a section among them who believed that only by claiming India to Christianity could the country be made safe for the Empire. A long line of British statesmen, including Warren Hastings, Munro and Mountstuart Elphinstone, had warned their countrymen against allowing the intrusion of religion into the government of India and into her educational institutions. Warren Hastings dismissed the missionaries as "self-authorized or self-ordained preachers" whose sermons were little better than "gross superstitions". Semi-literate men, never too far from the flesh-pots and the gambling table, spoke and wrote errant nonsense about Indian religions, claiming sanction and immunity for their vapourings on the sole ground that they wore the livery of the Church. Their superstitions and stupidities were truly amazing.¹⁸ Their scurrilous attacks on Hinduism revolted true Christians like William Carey who asked: "Is this the doctrine of our faith?" Stating his own religious faith, he declared that he was of "the sect which believes that a just God will condemn no being without individual guilt". Raja Ram Mohan Roy attributed the offensive behaviour of the missionaries and their vilifying campaign to the loss of India's independence.

Unfortunately, the warnings of wise men fell on deaf ears. The sepoys' revolt at Vellore in South India in 1806 and at Barrackpore in 1824 against the attempted encroachments upon

¹⁸ Claudius Buchanan, for instance, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury thus: "It is certain that nothing will more alarm the portentous invader of nations (Napoleon) than our taking a religious possession of Hindustan. Five hundred respectable clergy of the English Church, established in our Gentoo cities, would more perplex his views of conquest than an army of fifty thousand British soldiers." Commenting on this amazing display of superstition, Sir John Kaye writes: "The current faith was not that the Bible would beat Napoleon's artillery, but that it would expedite our overthrow more surely and more rapidly." (*The Administration of the East India Company*, p. 635.)

their religious faith had borne no lesson to the proselytizers. The aim of conversion, declared Joshua Marshman with complete honesty, was to create a new community of Indians devoted to British rule and working for its permanence. Even the colonels in the Army considered it part of their duty to disrupt the loyalty of their men to their ancestral faith. "Conscientiously prudent," writes Kaye, "they believed that it was their duty to render unto God the just tribute of an apostolic activity." He adds: "Holding fast to the wages of the State, they went about with the order book in one hand and the Bible in the other; and thus they did a great and grievous wrong to the Government they professed to serve."¹⁹ The sepoys burnt with anger at the superciliousness of their officers, who added insult to injury by calling them "niggers" and "suars" or pigs. Self-centred and incompetent, they lived in the dreamland of their own creation, inviting retribution for their misdeeds, but blissfully ignorant both about its coming and its magnitude.

A good deal has been written about the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, also described as the national revolt. In spite of all that has been claimed on its behalf, the uprising was neither pre-planned nor was it intended to attain any noble ideals. There was no understanding or co-operation between the sepoys and the leaders of the disaffected civilian population. It was in fact no better than a sudden and violent protest against the progressive as well as the imprudent policies of the Government. The sepoys, who had a religious prejudice against sea-voyage, were deeply agitated over the passing of the General Service Enlistment Act in

¹⁹ *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, John William Kaye, Vol. I, W. H. Allen, 1865, pp. 479-80. Missionary propaganda still poses a problem in India. In this land of tolerance, the message of the Prince of Peace is always welcome and it is inconceivable that there could have been a more ardent admirer or a more sincere practitioner of his teachings than Mahatma Gandhi. But, as disclosed by the Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee of Madhya Pradesh, 1956, missionary activities designed to subvert Indian solidarity, with generous financial aid from abroad, deserve unreserved condemnation. The great French savant, Romain Rolland, who knew "the taste of Christ's blood and enjoyed the storehouse of profound life", declared that the religion of one country did not "always work upon alien races through its best elements". He went a step further and maintained that "even in its highest presentation, it is very rare that one religion takes possession of the spirit of another race in its deepest essence at the final pitch of the soul" (*The Life of Ramakrishna*, pp. 147-48). There cannot be a more salutary or a more authoritative advice to the over-zealous and misguided *padres* in this country.

1856 which imposed an obligation on them to serve anywhere in India and abroad. Even more offensive to the religious susceptibilities of both Hindu and Muslim soldiers was the use of greased cartridges for the new Enfield rifle. The cartridges, which had to be bitten off before their insertion into the rifle, were stated to be smeared with the fat of cows and pigs which impartially outraged the feelings of both Hindus and Muslims! The inflamed feelings of the sepoys found their expression in January 1857 at Dumdum near Calcutta, where the troops flatly refused to use the "contaminated" cartridges. The actual outbreak, however, occurred on May 10 at Meerut where many British officers were shot dead. The insurgents marched to Delhi which fell into their hands, the Indian garrison there having joined them. The old figurehead, Emperor Bahadur Shah, who would have preferred to be left alone and forgotten, was resurrected from his obscurity and pitchforked into the leadership of the revolution. Elated by their early successes and with none to counsel moderation, the rebellious soldiers and civilians committed unpardonable excesses in places like Meerut, Delhi, Kanpur and Jhansi.

The civilian uprising was equally ill-organised and aimless. Prominent among those who raised the standard of revolt were Nana Saheb Peshwa, the Rani of Jhansi, Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur near Arrah in Bihar, Azimullah, the faithful and valiant servant of Nana Saheb, and that genius in evasive warfare, Tatia Topi. Nana Saheb would perhaps have been lost to the cause if his adoptive father, Bajirao Peshwa's pension had been continued to him. Indeed, personal disappointment played no small part in deciding most of those leaders to draw the sword against the British. Notable among them was Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi whose courageous stand and death on the battlefield have won for her an honoured place in the Indian history. Sir Hugh Rose, who commanded the troops against her, describes the Rani as "the best and bravest military leader of the rebels".

There were overwhelming reasons why the challenge to British rule failed. The fact that, out of an army of 238,000, only 38,000 were Europeans made no difference to the outcome. Only the Bengal army was seriously affected, but even those sepoys that took up arms were half-hearted, irresolute and leaderless. Important elements like the Sikhs, the Punjabi Muslims,

and the Gurkhas fought whole-heartedly on the side of the Government. Although considerable areas in North India were convulsed with violence and disorder, the rest of the country, including the Punjab, Kashmir, Rajasthan, South India and the Bombay Presidency, was surprisingly indifferent to the revolt. Reinforcements to strengthen the loyal sepoys and the British troops arrived at critical times from Madras, Bombay and Ceylon and even from Lord Elgin in distant China. In fact, the recovery of the British was swift and complete. Delhi, the centre of the insurgents' hopes and the citadel of their prestige, was captured in September, together with their reluctant leader, the Emperor. The unhappy old man was brought to trial on January 27, 1858, in his own palace and charged with making war against the British Government. He was packed off to Pegu in Burma where he lived in peace till his death in 1862 at the age of eighty-seven.

The spectacle presented by the civilians was even more unedifying. With honourable exceptions, most of the leaders, such as they were, were frustrated persons who communicated their resentment to the credulous masses around them by rousing their fears about the changes that were taking place in their social and economic life. There was no unity of purpose or of action among them. The verdict of Maulana Azad, free India's first Education Minister, on them is conclusive. "I am," he wrote in his Foreword to a book, "forced to the sad conclusion that Indian national character had sunk very low. The leaders of the revolt could never agree. They were mutually jealous and continually intrigued against one another. They seemed to have little regard for the effects of such disagreement on the common cause. In fact, these personal jealousies and intrigues were largely responsible for the Indian defeat."²⁰ Educated Indians steered clear of the revolt, seeing that it contained no embers of patriotism.²¹

Despite their dissatisfaction with the British paramountcy, most of the princes also kept themselves aloof from the uprising, being persuaded that discretion was the better part of valour. The Nizam, Sindhia, Holkar, the Gaekwar, the rulers of Rajas-

²⁰ *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, Surendranath Sen, Foreword by Maulana Azad, The Publications Division, 1957, p. xv.

²¹ *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, R. C. Majumdar, 1957, p. 270.

than, the Maharajas of Mysore and Travancore and the Sikh rulers of Patiala and Jind remained steadfast to the British connection. In fact, Gwalior and Hyderabad held a crucial position and much depended upon their attitude. "Had Sindhia," says P. E. Roberts, "raised the standard of revolt, every Maratha State would have joined him." Sir Dinkar Rao, the far-sighted Prime Minister of the Maharaja, kept his master straight on the path of loyalty to the British Raj, while similar service was rendered by Sir Salar Jang on behalf of the Nizam.²²

The opportunity for regaining India's freedom through armed revolt had been irretrievably lost during the regime of Lord Hastings and it was too late to attempt such a method in 1857. Even after the dissolution of the Maratha Empire, the Nepalese War of 1814-15 gave ample scope for a wide-ranging combination of the Indian States against the rising power of the British. The miserably-equipped Gurkhas, numbering a mere 12,000, had shown that even a disciplined army, nearly thrice the size of their own, could be humbled if opposition to the foreigners was inspired by patriotism. Metcalfe's lamentations in January 1815 on the plight of the British in the Nepalese War are noteworthy: "We have met with an enemy who shows decidedly greater bravery and greater steadiness than our troops possess; and it is impossible to say what may be the end of such a reverse of the order of things. In some instances, our troops, European and native, have been repulsed by inferior numbers with sticks and stones. In others, our troops have been charged by the enemy sword in hand, and driven for miles like a flock of sheep. . . . Our power rested solely on our military superiority. With respect to one enemy, that is gone. In this war, dreadful to say, we have had numbers on our side, and skill and bravery on the side of our enemy."²³ Despite his frantic appeals for help, addressed to many princes and potentates, both in India and abroad, including Ranjit Singh and Sindhia, the valiant King of the hill-State was forced to fight with the formidable British single-handed and later came to terms with them as best he could. After this event, all hopes of regaining the country's independence through war became illusory.

²² *History of British India under the Company and the Crown*, P. E. Roberts, pp. 378-79.

²³ *The Life and Correspondence of Charles, Lord Metcalfe*, J. W. Kaye, Smith Elder, 1858, Vol. I, pp. 294-295

In 1857 the British dominion in India was far more firmly entrenched than during the Gurkha War of 1814-15. In the intervening period, the country had become militarily helpless and economically impoverished, with no adequate means for facing a fast-developing Empire. As the pioneer of industrial capitalism, based on coal, iron and textiles, Britain in fact fostered the growth of a new civilization that became the model for the rest of Europe, over which she gained a lead for half a century. Again, it was during this period, beginning broadly from the first decade of the nineteenth century, that the world entered a new era of integration under the compulsion of Western technology—"an era that might, without undue exaggeration, be termed the European age". The "quenchless hunger" of the power-driven machines for raw materials and for markets drove the industrial powers to start a new campaign of colonial imperialism.²⁴ It was, therefore, idle to expect that a landlocked, dissipated and disorganized people could offer successful resistance to the foremost European Power in the world. Even assuming that the British could be dislodged for a while, they would have come back to India, with all their strength and resources, and recaptured her.

In retrospect, discerning men have few tears to spare for the failure of the mutiny. Despite its drawbacks, the British administration was most desirable since it was bound to lead Indians eventually to their national independence. Nothing could be more fantastic than the prospect of imbeciles like Bahadur Shah re-occupying the throne of Babar and reviving all the outmoded and ruinous splendour of the Moghuls. Nor would it have been in conformity with the spirit of the times to look upon Nana Saheb Peshwa, for example, as a worthy representative of a nascent India. These men deserved to fade into history, making room for another type of leadership, imbued with entirely new ideals and with a new spirit of nationalism. It was only men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who could prepare the country for its great destiny and not all the armies of Britain could defeat them or their cause. There should, therefore, be no regret that the sepoy mutiny of 1857 ended as it did.

But the manner in which the uprising was suppressed served as an eye-opener to all thinking persons. Primeval savagery was

²⁴ *The European Inheritance*, Edited by Sir Ernest Barker, Vol. III, p. 98.

displayed in dealing with a challenge that was neither pre-meditated nor supported by any large and influential sections of the population. Britain's stakes in India were large and the mere thought of losing the prize drove even the most level-headed men to insane anger. Canning did not fight the mutiny with kid-gloves. Writing to the Lieutenant-Governor at Agra in May 1857, the Governor-General suggested that "no amount of severity can be too great". He was even more explicit when he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief in the same month: "I should rejoice to hear that there had been no holding our men, and that the vengeance had been terrible." And yet he was sneered at by his countrymen as "Clemency" Canning. Colonel John Nicholson perhaps more truly represented their sentiments. The irate Colonel wrote in May 1857: "Let us propose a Bill for the flaying alive, impalement, or burning of the murderers of the women and children at Delhi. The idea of simply hanging the perpetrators of such atrocities is maddening. I wish that I were in that part of the world, that if necessary I might take the law into my own hands."²⁵ The demand for unbridled revenge was widespread. The *London Times* wrote: "Justice, humanity, the safety of our countrymen, and the honour of our country demand that the slaughter of Delhi shall be punished with unsparing severity." The paper deprecated the mere disbanding of a mutinous regiment and felt that the men ought to have been "mowed down by artillery".

Canning was surprised at the behaviour of his countrymen. "There is," he wrote to Queen Victoria, "a rabid and indiscriminate vindictiveness abroad even among those who ought to set a better example." Sir Frederick Halliday, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was in constant and confidential correspondence with Canning who showed him papers illustrating the "scandalous brutality" of some of the special tribunals trying the insurgents. Asked to publish the documents in order to silence the outcry against him, the Governor-General declared: "I had rather submit to an obloquy than publish to the world what would so terribly disgrace my countrymen. It is sufficient that I have prevented them for the future."²⁶ The mutiny left behind long and bitter memories on both sides. It led to the

²⁵ *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, J. W. Kaye, Vol. II, p. 401.

²⁶ *Earl Canning*, Sir H. S. Cunningham, p. 126.

adoption of a new and uncompromising policy towards Indian political aspirations, representing a complete negation of all that statesmen like Warren Hastings, Munro, Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone had stood for. Under the new dispensation, India could not hope to be free within any measurable distance of time. Thenceforward racial arrogance and a total isolation from the stream of Indian life became a conspicuous feature of the British community's existence in this country.

The post-mutiny settlement bore all the marks of the country's "reconquest". The East India Company was abolished, in spite of the entreaties of the Directors and the eloquent exhortations of John Stuart Mill to the British Government to spare it. It was a welcome step, as the continued existence of the Company even after its trading rights had been taken away from it in 1833, was clearly anomalous. During its career of over 250 years, beginning from A.D. 1600, this unique commercial body accomplished much that was both praiseworthy and disgraceful. The convulsion of 1857 demonstrated that it had long outlived the period of its usefulness. The Act of 1858, which caused the Company's dissolution, declared that thenceforward India would be governed directly by the Crown of England, acting through a Secretary of State, who was to inherit all the powers exercised either by the Court of Directors or by the Board of Control. The Secretary of State was to be assisted by a Council of fifteen members, the majority of whom should be men with Indian experience.

The reorganisation of the army was thorough and was designed to prevent any more armed resurrections in the country. The number of British soldiers was increased so as to bear a proportion of fifty-fifty in the Bengal army and of one to two in the armies of the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. The Indian artillery, which had proved so formidable during the mutiny, was disbanded. As will be discussed in a later chapter, the fictitious doctrine of martial and non-martial races was introduced in order to prevent the intelligent and assertive classes from gaining access to the armed forces. Many other objectionable measures were adopted with a view to ensuring the ascendancy of the British in an army called Indian.

The discovery of the value of the princes to the Raj amounted to a divine revelation! Out of a profound sense of gratitude

for their role during the mutiny, the British Government solemnly assured them that their States would not be abolished on any account. Even the Laws of the Medes might change, but not the polity in Princely India! In 1860, Canning granted 160 *sanads* of adoption to the princes, thus proclaiming that the doctrine of lapse had been abandoned. Seventeen such *sanads* were given later by Lord Lansdowne in 1890. It is not clear in what precise constitutional language the bonds thus forged between the British Indian Government and the princes can be described, but the ties never snapped until the Raj itself came to an end. Indian nationalism was saddled with the problem of the States throughout its struggle for political independence. The tightening of Britain's hold on India by reorganising her civil and military administration and by placating the States' rulers and a plethora of sectional interests with titles, patronage and preferential treatment, formed an outstanding feature of the post-mutiny settlement. It also marked the beginning of a new era for Indian nationalism.

6. GROWTH OF NATIONALISM IN INDIA

THE remarkable growth of nationalism in India under British rule would not have been possible if her people had not long been united by ties of culture and religion which endured in spite of the numerous political turmoils with which the country was afflicted. Nationalism in Europe became a divisive force and broke up the continent into many mutually-exclusive and self-regarding States. Although nearly as large as Europe till her partition in 1947, India was saved from such a catastrophe precisely because of her pre-existing unity. Indeed, the process of integration had begun, even as Britain was engaged in expanding and consolidating her dominion in the country. The genius of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, his earnestness and his noble ideals, drew to his reformist movement men of talent and prestige who carried the Brahmo message to a wider circle of intellectuals. Dwarkanath Tagore and his son Devendranath Tagore, the Poet's father, were indefatigable workers in the cause of the new enlightenment. The mantle of leadership eventually fell upon a young and brilliant man, Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884), whose contribution to the social uplift of his countrymen was excelled by none of his predecessors except by Roy. The eminent Professor Max Müller acclaimed Sen as India's "greatest son". Perhaps, Sen would have left many more monuments to his greatness if he had been able to restrain and moderate his enthusiasm for the West and its institutions.

His contemporary, Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), was cast in a different mould. The founder of the Arya Samaj was a profound scholar and a master of Sanskrit. He drew his strength and inspiration entirely from the founts of India's ancient wisdom and proclaimed with admirable certitude the paramountcy of the Vedas as the supreme repositories of human knowledge. He saw the intellectual and religious degeneration of his countrymen who, either readily succumbed to the mere-

tricious attractions of the West, or held to their outmoded beliefs almost with pathological perversity. He fought against these tendencies, not with kid gloves, but with the mailed fist. He condemned the Christian missionaries for "trapping" Indians into their faith and rejoicing at their gains like a fisherman gloating over his big catch. The Swami was no less unyielding in his determination to dismantle the ramparts of Hindu orthodoxy. He stormed its very citadel at Banaras and by engaging the erudite no-changers in a Homeric disputation, humbled them by proving that the caste system, with its unjust social gradations, the worship of idols and many other practices and beliefs were accretions wholly alien to the simple and benign religion of the Vedic Aryans. He pleaded for social equality, for the removal of untouchability, for the revival of Vedic studies, and for the diffusion of true knowledge. Dayananda's bold but rational crusade on behalf of the Vedas restored to his countrymen the much-needed faith and pride in the culture and civilization of their motherland.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886) was another luminary, whose spiritual experiences and ecstasies deeply impressed contemporary Bengal and the rest of India. Outstanding among his disciples was Narendra, who later became famous as Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). The Swami was a sound scholar and a prolific writer. To these assets, he added the gift of oratory. His speeches at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, which opened in September 1893, not only helped the American people to gain a vivid glimpse into the antiquity and the splendour of the Hindu civilization, but also stimulated among the thinking sections in the West a wider interest in the Indian religion and philosophy. The Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Vivekananda, has grown into a world organisation, dedicated to the spread of true knowledge about India and to the provision of relief to the distressed. The Swami, besides being a social reformer, was an ardent patriot and for some time conceived the project of leading a national revolt against the British rulers.¹

There was thus a congenial climate for the growth of political awakening in India, but, for some considerable time, the aspira-

¹ *The Rise and Growth of the Congress*, C. F. Andrews and Girja Mukerji, G. Allen & Unwin, 1938, p. 43.

tions of the English-educated classes were moderate. None among them desired the end of British rule either in their lifetime or even later, but they were all profoundly dissatisfied with their present helpless condition. From the middle of the nineteenth century political associations sprang up in many parts of the country, as, for example, in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Poona, in order to provide a platform to the local intelligentsia to ventilate their views on public affairs. As pioneers, they certainly served a useful purpose, but they could not supply the need for a principal organisation, invested with the prestige due to a national institution and competent to speak on behalf of the country as a whole. Nothing could have been more appropriate than the fact that the initiative for founding such a representative body should have come from an Englishman. Allan Octavian Hume, whose memory is deeply cherished in India as the Father of the Indian National Congress, secured the assent of Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy, to the creation of such a national forum. In his famous appeal of March 1, 1883, addressed to the "Graduates of Calcutta University", Hume exhorted India's youngmen to come forward and assume the leadership of their country by qualifying themselves for that role. "Our little army," he declared, "must be *sui generis* in discipline and equipment" and asked how many among them would fulfil the test. He wanted fifty such dedicated Indians, but got more.

The first session of the Indian National Congress was held in Bombay on December 28, 1885, with W. C. Bonnerjee as President. It was an assemblage of highly-educated and distinguished Indians, drawn from many parts of the country, whose attachment to the British Raj was at least as great as their patriotism. Year after year they catalogued the grievances of their countrymen with disconcerting pertinacity, but never wavered in affirming their loyalty and devotion to the British Crown and its Government in India. At the second session of the Congress at Calcutta, W. C. Bonnerjee asked the delegates whether such an assembly of his countrymen, speaking one language, could have been possible in the past, and added: "Such a thing is possible under British rule and under British rule only." As we march down the corridor of time, we find no less a person than Sir

Surendranath Banerjea, a man who had been cruelly wronged by his dismissal from the Indian Civil Service, proclaiming in 1902 as President of the Congress that his countrymen had "no higher aspiration than that we should be admitted into the great confederacy of self-governing States, of which England is the august mother". He did not, of course, want any radical change in his lifetime, for he recognised "that the journey towards the goal must necessarily be slow, and that the blessed consummation can be attained only after prolonged preparation and laborious apprenticeship".² All that he desired was that a beginning should be made in that direction.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a man of sterling character and of superlative abilities, had no doubt in his mind that "whatever advance we seek must be within the Empire itself". Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India, who wrote and spoke fearlessly in defence of his country's demands, was equally frank in expressing his faith in British justice. "We are British subjects," he said and on that ground claimed "a right to all British institutions."

The moderation of the Congressmen and the reasonableness of their demands deeply impressed many fair-minded Englishmen. Sir William Wedderburn and Sir Henry Cotton were distinguished officers of the Indian Government. They won the gratitude of the Indian people by their vigorous championship of the Indian cause and in grateful recognition of their services they were elevated to the presidentship of the Congress. The number of British friends of India was indeed large and included such stalwarts as John Bright and Charles Bradlaugh. Fawcett waged this country's wars in the British Parliament even before the Congress was born. Dufferin, who had encouraged the founding of the Congress without realising its potentialities as the competent receiver of the Indian Government after British withdrawal, invited its delegates to a garden party during its Calcutta session, while in December 1890 Lord Lansdowne, the Viceroy, expressed his confidence in the organisation by calling it a "perfectly legitimate" body. Lord Hardinge gave a ceremonial reception to its members when they waited upon the

² *A Nation in Making*, Sir Surendranath Banerjea, Oxford, 1925, p 314.

Viceroy in December 1910. Such courtesies were extended to the Congressmen by several provincial Governors.

The demands of the Congress during this period were necessarily modest. Self-determination, a phrase coined by Lenin and popularised by President Wilson, was still a nebulous concept in Indian politics, but what the Congress asked from the rulers was by no means vague. It demanded the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the working of the administration and urged the abolition of the India Council of the Secretary of State which it rightly regarded as a reactionary body. It desired the introduction of the elective principle in the legislative councils and the right of interpellation. It also demanded a fair deal for the nationals of this country in the recruitment to the Indian Civil Service and asked that the examinations for the Service should be held simultaneously in India and England. In addition, it pleaded that the age-limit of the candidates appearing for the examination should be suitably raised. Military expenditure was considered heavy and its reduction was advocated. The Congress also demanded the removal of the ban on the admission of Indians to the officer ranks in the armed forces. Resolutions, embodying these and similar aspirations, were passed year after year at its annual session, but with diminishing hopes of their realisation.

This is not surprising because the British rulers of the post-mutiny period belonged to a class of men who viewed with ill-concealed hostility any attempts to change the *status quo*. It was the noon of the Empire and nothing could be more preposterous for a subject people to ask for rights and privileges. The agitation over the Ilbert Bill revealed in all its terrifying vividness that India's progress to self-rule would not be smooth or simple. The Bill, introduced in the Legislative Council by Sir Courtenay Ilbert, on February 2, 1883, merely sought to remove a legal anomaly without in any way impinging upon the existing rights, privileges and immunities of the white community in the country. Indian magistrates in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were empowered to try European offenders in their courts, but were denied such jurisdiction in the mofussil towns even when they went there on promotion. Apart from the manifest injustice of the arrange-

ment, it entailed considerable hardship to poor Indians who, like those working in the tea plantations of Assam, had to travel long distances in order to obtain legal redress against their European employers. Lord Ripon (1880-1884), one of the finest Viceroys of India, saw the need for reform and gave his assent to the introduction of an amending Bill in the legislature.

The storm that broke out on this simple issue was most surprising. "Within a few weeks," writes Ripon's biographer "the whole of the British community in the peninsula was swept by a tornado of violent denunciation of the Bill. A monster indignation meeting took place in the Calcutta Town Hall, at which the speeches were of an intemperance beyond all limits of decency."³ Reverend Henry Whitehead, Bishop of Madras, was an eye-witness to the misbehaviour of his countrymen and what he saw drove him to the sad conclusion that "it really seemed as though they had cast all commonsense to the winds".⁴ The agitators, besides "sounding opinions in the canteens", that is, attempting to seduce the Army, wrote and spoke with complete recklessness and even toyed with the idea of expelling the Viceroy from the country! Indians (described as "so called Indians"!), were, of course, their especial target. On March 29, 1883, the *Englishman*, a mouthpiece of the white community, carried the following advertisement in its columns: "Wanted Sweepers, Punkah Coolies and Bhisties for the residents of Saidapur. None but educated Bengalee Baboos who have passed the Entrance Examination need apply. Ex-Deputy Magistrates (Bengali) preferred."⁵ Such madness was, however, not confined to Indian shores. Speaking against the Ilbert Bill at a public meeting in London, W. S. Setton-Kerr, a former member of the Bengal Civil Service and Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, declared that the proposed measure outraged the "cherished conviction" of every Englishman that he belonged "to a race whom God has destined to govern and subdue". Ripon's liberalism collapsed before such concerted onslaught on the Bill which was pigeonholed. Its place was taken

³ *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon*, Lucien Wolf, Vol. II, John Murray, 1921, p. 128.

⁴ *Indian Problems*, The Right Reverend Henry Whitehead, Constable, 1924, p. 207.

⁵ *The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon*, S. Gopal, Oxford, 1953, p. 146.

by a new measure which perpetuated the injustice to Indians in another form.

Gokhale, who saw both the good and the bad points in the British rule with the unerring discernment of a statesman and a patriot, was convinced that "social equality pre-supposed political equality". This profound truth was again and again brought home to the Indian people, including the tallest among them. Sir Henry Cotton records in his book *New India or India in Transition* how Mr. Justice Mahmood, son of the famous Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, was not allowed to visit the Madras Club even though he had accompanied Sir Charles Turner, the Chief Justice, on the ground that he was a "native". Gokhale himself was grossly insulted on a railway train, but refused to disclose the name of the British offender despite the earnest entreaties of Lord Curzon.⁶ It was customary for Lady Minto, the wife of the Viceroy, to call their guest, the Amir of Afghanistan, a barbarian. In our own time, Pandit Motilal Nehru, father of the late Prime Minister of India, declined to accept the suggestion of Sir John Edge, Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court, that he should apply for the membership of the European Club in the city. As his son wrote, "any subaltern could black-ball him, and he would rather not offer himself for election under these circumstances".⁷

Political concessions in such an atmosphere were clearly impossible. Ripon bitterly complained that even his modest proposals to liberalise the municipal administration were defeated by the India Council. The high-handed acts of Curzon revealed that there was in fact no common ground between the Indian people and their British rulers. A cultivated flower of Eton and Balliol and the darling of the Establishment, Curzon came to India as Viceroy (1899-1905) with the determination to govern

⁶ Gopal Krishna Gokhale, T. V. Parvate, 1959, p. 429.

⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru: An Autobiography, Bodley Head, 1936, pp. 288-89. India was, however, not the only country that was exposed to such indignities. Britain's racial discrimination was universal in all subject countries, where retaliation was not possible. Paradoxically, a nation that had the most democratic traditions exposed itself to the reproach of snobbery, largely because of its position as an imperial Power. At the height of its glory, it did not, of course, count the cost of such a policy. A few years ago, Sir John Latham, Chief Justice of Australia, made a hard-hitting speech at the Sydney Rotary Club, in which he asserted that Britain lost her colonies in Asia and Africa on account of the racial arrogance of her agents—a point of view that received the support of the London *Times*.

the country in the style of Akbar. He had persuaded himself that the best form of government for a subject people was benevolent autocracy. In fact, he did not believe in democracy and equality even for his own people.⁸ "We shall be," he declared on the eve of his assumption of his Indian office, "the images of the Empress to our new subjects, and our life must live up to what they expect from a ruler and his consort."

Curzon did not lose much time in courting unpopularity in India. His measures to reduce the power and influence of the elected element in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation and his attempts to officialise the Universities, the seed-beds of ability, were part of a well-considered drive to frustrate Indian aspirations and to demonstrate to the world that the people of this country were inherently incapable of administering their own affairs. His hostility to the Congress, a thoroughly loyal body, was open and implacable. As he wrote to the Secretary of State on November 18, 1900, it was one of his cherished aims as Viceroy "to assist it to a peaceful demise"—a task to which he did not feel unequal since it was in his view already "tottering" to its fall! A Titan among his peers and a man of outstanding abilities and brilliance, Curzon was nevertheless temperamental, unstable and extremely short-sighted.

The partition of Bengal, announced on July 20, 1905, was his regime's worst blunder which gave Indian nationalism its first opportunity since 1857 to measure its strength with the bureaucracy. Bengal had certainly grown into an unwieldy province and there was every need to curtail its size in order to ensure its efficient administration. If this was the Viceroy's only aim, it could have been realised by detaching the non-Bengali districts from the province, but such an arrangement would not have served his political ends. As Surendranath Banerjea pointed out, "it was openly and officially given out that Eastern Bengal and Assam were to be a Mohamedan province" and that "credal distinctions were to be recognised as the basis of the new policy to be adopted in the new province". Official patronage was liberally used in order to enlist Muslim support to the plan which was "hatched in secret" by Curzon and Sir Andrew Fraser, Governor of Bengal. Nawab Salimulla of Dacca,

⁸ Curzon: *The End of an Epoch*, Leonard Mosley, Longmans, 1960, p 87.

who had earlier condemned it as a "beastly arrangement", later swore by it after receiving a loan of about £100,000 on advantageous terms.⁹ Morley denounced the partition of Bengal in the House of Commons as "a measure which went wholly and decisively against the wishes of the majority of the people concerned", but was not prepared to remedy the wrong on the ground that it had become a "settled fact".

It was this settled fact that Bengal and the rest of India decided to unsettle. In Bengal, young and old, the educated and the unlettered, and the landless labourer and the rich zamindar, all joined in one mighty effort to undo the partition. The spontaneity of the movement and its intensity appalled and unnerved the authorities, but prestige stood in the way of right action. The *swadeshi* movement gained a great impetus during the agitation, thus giving hope and encouragement to the Indian entrepreneur to start new enterprises for replacing British imports. The indiscretions and blunders of Sir Bampfylde Fuller, Governor of the new province, gave a further fillip to the movement. Besides proclaiming his partiality for the Muslims, Fuller adopted brutal methods to suppress the popular protest. He was in fact impetuous and hare-brained and provoked even a man like Sir Pertab Singh, that boneless wonder, to ask: "What ails Fuller Sahib, that he wants to blow flies from cannon?" At last, the bureaucracy realised the folly of its obstinacy and abrogated the partition by means of an announcement by King George at the Delhi Darbar on December 12, 1911. It was the first retreat of the Government before the onslaughts of Indian nationalism and became a prelude to many more open conflicts between the two, the final outcome of which could never be in doubt.

It would be extremely unfair to Curzon if we merely catalogued his mistakes. India owes a deep debt of gratitude to him for the many good things he did for her. His amazing industry and his almost fanatical zeal for efficiency and discipline and for methodical and expeditious despatch of public work, became an invaluable asset to an administration that had long become slovenly and somnolent. He has won a permanent place in the

⁹ *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development*. Gurumukh Nihal Singh, India Book Shop, 1933, p. 319.

Indian history for the thoroughness with which he ensured the preservation of the country's ancient monuments. He showed similar solicitude for Indian art industries and crafts. The creation of an Archaeological Department made it possible for scholars to undertake a systematic study of India's ancient history in its many aspects. The contribution of Sir John Marshall, the first Director-General of Archaeology, to the unravelling of the country's glorious past is well known. Curzon's Viceroyalty was indeed memorable.

On the basic issue of self-government India, however, continued to draw a blank. Even Gokhale, that exemplar of moderation, began to doubt whether the promises made by Britain were really intended to be kept. Youngmen, who had studied with deep interest and fervour the literature of revolt and rebellion against alien rule, became increasingly restive and refused to fly their country's flag at half-mast for all time to come. The era of prayer and petition was fast coming to an end and the time-honoured method of armed revolt threatened to dominate the situation. In Maharashtra, and more especially in its political and cultural centre, Poona, the feeling that the Marathas had been within an ace of acquiring continental sovereignty was always present in the minds of the intellectual classes. In two revealing letters, addressed to Lytton, the Viceroy, on July 3 and 9, 1879, Sir Richard Temple, Governor of Bombay from 1877 to 1880, drew pointed attention to this fact. He had, he wrote, served in India for more than three decades, but had never known in any part of the country "a national and political ambition so continuous, so enduring, so far-reaching and so utterly impossible for us to satisfy".¹⁰ He saw that Shivaji's name had a talismanic effect on the minds of the Marathas. Temple's report on the state of Maharashtra before the coming of Bal Gangadhar Tilak to the political scene is important because it greatly explains the bureaucracy's subsequent behaviour towards this great national leader and his people. In fact, its animosity to Poona disappeared only with the end of its own existence.

¹⁰ Letters published in *The Hindustan Times Weekly* of July 1 and 8, 1962, by G. R. G. Hambly.

The lead against the Government was given in Maharashtra by Wasudev Balwant Phadke who raised the standard of revolt in 1878-79, but beyond stirring up popular excitement in Western India, his exploits did not accomplish much. It became increasingly evident to thinking patriots that the only effective sanctions against an unresponsive bureaucracy were a sustained, well-organised and broad-based mass movement which no coercive apparatus could quell. Lokmanya Tilak came forward to forge such sanctions by reviving the combative spirit of his people. Tilak was a man of letters *par excellence* and his works, *Orion*, the *Arctic Home in the Vedas* and *Gita Rahasya*, the last a brilliant commentary in Marathi on the Bhagvad Gita, bear ample testimony to his massive industry and scholarship. But he deliberately chose politics, feeling the country's political dependence with the intensity of a personal affront. Conditions in Maharashtra, as Sir Richard Temple had reported to Lord Lytton, were ideal for starting a crusade for national freedom. A man of keen perception, Tilak lost no time in popularising the life and work of Shivaji, as none had done before, and held him up before his people as a great hero and liberator.¹¹ He also gave a new significance to the festival of Ganpati, the elephant-headed god, and made it an occasion for mass meetings when discourses on a wide variety of subjects, including public affairs, were given by knowledgeable and scholarly persons. He started a Marathi weekly paper called *Kesari* in 1881 and used its columns to rouse the dormant energies of his countrymen. *The Mahratta*, also a weekly, was edited in English for the benefit of the reader outside Maharashtra.

Tilak was not a revolutionary, not because he objected to armed revolt, but because he was a realist. He knew that a

¹¹ The fame of Shivaji as a great leader was not confined to Maharashtra. His name became familiar to the intellectuals of Bengal from 1826 when Grant Duff's *History of the Mahrattas* was published. Satyendranath Tagore, an elder brother of the Poet and the first Indian to enter the Indian Civil Service, did much to popularise the sacred and historical literature of Maharashtra in his home province. Having served in the Bombay Presidency for thirty-three years from 1865, he was eminently qualified to undertake this task. A number of books were published in Bengali on Shivaji and Rabindranath himself wrote a stirring poem on the Maratha hero. The Poet also evinced the warmest admiration for Lokmanya Tilak. (An article entitled *Marathi theme in Bengali Literature* by R. K. Dasgupta, published in *The Hindustan Times* of July 1, 1962, gives much useful information on the subject.)

well-entrenched government, backed by a powerful army, could not be dislodged by desultory armed uprisings. Nor could that end be achieved by merely flinging bombs at individuals. He, therefore, believed in a different *modus operandi*, namely, to state the country's case in clear and categorical terms and to enlist popular support to it through vigorous advocacy. He was relentless in pursuit of this strategy and came into perpetual conflict with a touchy, vindictive and unimaginative bureaucracy. The behaviour of the plague authorities when the epidemic invaded Poona in 1897 was, to say the least, beastly. The measures adopted by them to combat the epidemic, though well-meant, flagrantly ignored the convenience and the religious susceptibilities of the people. Tilak, who fearlessly risked his own life in directing the non-official relief operations, filled the columns of *Kesari* with a criticism of the bureaucracy's misbehaviour that truly reflected the outraged feelings of the inhabitants. It was impossible for the authorities to forgive such merciless exposure.

The murder of Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst on the night of June 22, 1897, when the Anglo-Indian community in the city was celebrating the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria, gave the bureaucracy an opportunity to strike at Tilak, despite the fact that he had nothing to do with the crime or its perpetrator, Damodar Chaphekar. Tilak was arrested and put on trial in the Bombay High Court in September 1897 on the charge of publishing two "seditious" articles. Propounding the astounding doctrine that sedition was disaffection and that "disaffection means simply the absence of affection", Mr. Justice Strachey convicted the Lokmanya to eighteen months' hard labour.¹² The persecution of this courageous champion of resurgent nationalism was even more ruthless in 1908. Again his writings were objected to. The warrant of arrest, issued on June 24, charged him with promoting the people's disloyalty and enmity towards the Government. The judicial trial that ensued was a travesty of justice. Dr. M. R. Jayakar, an eminent jurist and a Privy Councillor, was convinced that the impugned articles were not at all seditious. The proceedings in the lower court amazed and repelled him. About Branson, the Prosecuting Counsel,

¹² *Lokamanya Tilak*, D. V. Tahmankar, John Murray, 1956, p. 88.

Dr. Jayakar wrote that his address to the jury, packed with Europeans, was "so vulgar, vindictive and gross that I left the Court in sheer disgust".¹³

Tilak was defended in the High Court by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the future founder of Pakistan. The scales were, however, heavily weighted against the patriot who was convicted by Justice Davar to six years' imprisonment! The Governor of Bombay, Sir George Clarke, later Lord Sydenham, conceded that the Lokmanya's conviction "created widespread sympathy on the part of the people". Tilak was removed to remote Mandalay in Burma in the hope that distance and long absence from his motherland would weaken his formidable influence upon his countrymen. But no such strategy could succeed in diminishing their admiration and affection for this heroic figure, who, by his matchless labours and sacrifices, made the anaemic politics of India purposeful and dynamic. Nor could the Anglo-Indian press and the bureaucracy, which pursued him with unexampled malevolence till his death in August 1920, forget or forgive him. Had he not declared: "Freedom is my birth-right, and I will have it"?

The persecution of respected national leaders, the campaign of the Anglo-Indian press against the Indian demand and the Government's stubborn refusal to concede any political concessions, inevitably widened the breach between the nationalists and the bureaucracy. Mettlesome youth, steeped in the political doctrines of Mazzini and Kossuth, gained the conviction that it was only the arbitrament of the sword that could break the deadlock. Hume had stumbled upon a vast amount of revolutionary literature which hastened him to make his famous call to the graduates of the University of Calcutta. Shyamji Krishnavarma, hailing from Kathiawar, started the Indian Home Rule League in London in 1905 and awarded overseas scholarships to brilliant Indian students, with the object of training a band of ardent patriots dedicated to the cause of national liberation. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, accounts of whose burning patriotism and daring exploits in Europe are still read with admiration, was a recipient of Shamji's scholarship. Similar financial assistance

¹³ *The Story of My Life*, M. R. Jayakar, Vol. I, Asia Publishing House, 1959, pp 93-94.

was given to Indian students by another philanthropist, S. R. Rana, an Indian resident of Paris. Many youngmen, with excellent academic records, abandoned their studies and careers in order to join the revolutionary movement. Lala Hardayal went to England in 1905 with a State scholarship to complete his education at Oxford. He, however, gave up his studies and founded the famous *Ghadr* (Mutiny) party in America. The great Aurobindo Ghosh, who was wholly educated in England and who had taken a first class in classical Tripos at Cambridge, deliberately chose a course of action that could offer him personally nothing but blood, toil, tears and sweat. On the eve of the First World War, a young South Indian patriot, Champakaraman Pillai, started an agitation abroad with German assistance. The Indian National Party, founded by him, included revolutionaries like Hardayal, Taraknath Das, Barkatulla, Chandra K. Chakrabarti and Heramba Lal Gupta.¹⁴

The opening decade of the twentieth century became noteworthy for political assassinations. On April 30, 1908, Khudiram Basu threw a bomb into a carriage at Muzaffarpur in the hope of killing Kingsford, an unpopular Magistrate, but the missile destroyed the lives of two women, Miss and Mrs. Kennedy. Indian votaries of violence carried their cult to the very heart of the imperial metropolis. On July 1, 1909, Madan Lal Dhingra, a well-born youngman from the Punjab, assassinated Colonel Sir William Curzon Wylie, Political A.D.C. at the India Office, and Dr. Lalkaka, an Indian, at the Imperial Institute in London. Young Dhingra's earnest declaration in the Court that he would gladly embrace death again and again for the liberation of his motherland and for her greater glory, reminded the listeners of the Irish patriot, Robert Emmet's famous dying words when he was sent to the gallows in September 1803 at the age of twenty-five. There was a surprising generosity in Churchill's reactions to the episode. Moved by Dhingra's speech, the great British statesman declared that it was the "finest ever made in the name

¹⁴ *The Sedition Committee Report*, 1918, p. 81. The Committee was set up by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Rowlatt, Judge of the King's Bench Division of His Majesty's High Court of Justice. The findings of the Committee are remarkable for being one-sided.

of patriotism".¹⁵ But no such generous impulses warmed the hearts of the bureaucrats in India. To give one more instance, on December 21, 1909, a youngman from Aurangabad, called Anant Luxman Kanhere, killed Jackson, Collector of Nasik, although he was a popular officer in the district.

Lord Minto (1905-1910), who was in charge of the Indian administration, failed to realise that official frightfulness was not a real cure for the country's *malaise*. At any rate, his political senior at the India Office, Lord Morley, knew that repression as a standardised remedy was singularly ineffective in defeating popular movements. But Minto's mental horizon was limited. A man, who could believe that Gladstone's liberalism had brought disgrace to his country, was inherently incapable of viewing the Indian situation in its correct perspective. In an address to the Legislative Council on June 8, 1908, the Viceroy announced his determination to eradicate the "anarchist crimes" and "cowardly conspiracies" in the country. Towards this end, he greatly strengthened the coercive apparatus of the Government and, admiring his own handiwork, grandiloquently announced to Morley, the Secretary of State, that the British race was unconquerable! "We shall fight for the Raj," he boasted, "as hard as we have ever fought if it comes to fighting and we shall win as we have always done."¹⁶

An old and congenitally indolent patrician, Minto behaved exactly like a stampeding pony when dealing with the Indian situation. Even those who belonged to his political school were repelled by the excessive severity of his coercive measures which revived memories of the ordinances of the Star Chamber. Indeed, they could most appropriately be described as the *ne plus ultra* of human despotism. Morley, the apostle of liberalism, blithely supported the Viceroy's government by frightfulness, thus proving that no ideal could be binding on the worshippers in the shrine of imperialism. No less a person than Sir Austen Chamberlain, himself a front-rank imperialist, felt constrained to write: "Did you read Morley's account of the repressive measures he has sanctioned in India? Deportation and imprisonment without trial, suppression of meetings, police

¹⁵ *Mahatma*, D. G. Tendulkar, The Times of India Press, Vol. I, 1952, p. 125.

¹⁶ *Lord Minto: A Memoir*, John Buchan, Nelson, 1924, pp. 277-78.

reports, power of district judges or resident magistrates—the whole armoury of Irish coercion! Is it not the irony of fate that it should fall to his lot to do this? I think he is rather proud of his strength in a rather weak man's way.”¹⁷ There was, however, nothing surprising in Morley's behaviour because almost every other member of the British ruling class would have acted likewise.

With a few exceptions, the Anglo-Indian press considered it perfectly legitimate to add fuel to the fire. The manner in which racial hatred was preached by a Calcutta paper during the Ilbert Bill controversy has already been recalled. The advice tendered by two Anglo-Indian journals to Kingsford, upon whose life an attempt was made, was equally unrestrained. He was asked to let “daylight into every strange native approaching his house or his person” and “to shoot fairly straight without taking his weapon out of his coat pocket”. The sage counsellors hoped that Kingsford would “manage to secure a big ‘bag’ and we envy him his opportunity”.¹⁸

The record of the Anglo-Indian press in general was indeed least praiseworthy throughout the British period. It began its career in 1780 when James Augustus Hicky founded the *Bengal Gazette* which specialised in ruining the reputations of individuals in its columns. The stringent press laws adopted by the authorities till Indian journalism came of age were actually intended to bridle the newspapers run by Europeans in this country. Not all those laws were just and John Adams' regulations were positively mischievous. Able and conscientious editors like J. S. Buckingham suffered grave injustice, but there was an improvement in their position with the removal of the fetters on the press in 1835 by Metcalfe. For some considerable time, the role of the Indian-owned papers was confined to the dissemination of useful information and knowledge among their readers. For instance, Raja Ram Mohan Roy's journals were distinguished for their sober and illuminating writing. It was only when the spirit of nationalism spread in the country and when the hostility to it increased that the Indian press enlarged

¹⁷ *Politics from Inside*, Sir Austen Chamberlain, Cassell, 1936, p. 87.

¹⁸ *Lokamanya Tilak*, D. V. Tahmankar, p. 174.

its activities and became, in addition to being a general educator, a political tutor and a champion of national aspirations.

Not all the Indian newspapers were restrained in their political comments, but the measures adopted against the nationalist press as a whole were both vindictive and discriminatory. It was a crime for the Indian papers to criticise the Government strongly even when criticism was fully justified, but it was perfectly honourable for the Anglo-Indian Press to attack the people of this country in the most intemperate language. Impartial observers, and there were always a fair number of them among the British, were frankly amazed at the low standard of the European-owned press. In 1868, Sir Henry Maine, the eminent historian and Oxford Professor, wrote about it thus: "We always knew that it was careless, shallow and scandalous. We now know all but for certain that it is corrupt." Sir William Hunter, another distinguished historian, felt constrained to say about the Calcutta press that "scurrility and servility seemed the only two notes known to it".¹⁹ With honourable exceptions, the papers were so blantly partisan in their support of the Government that the bureaucrats themselves found their championship embarrassing. Even Minto felt it necessary to agree with Morley that "the fault is not all on one side" and that "some of the Anglo-Indian press is both low and mischievous".²⁰ Lionel Curtis, the inventor of the famous political term *diarchy*, told the Secretary of State, Edwin Montagu, that the Anglo-Indian press was most unfair to Indians and that it was in the *habit* of vilifying them.²¹ Unfortunately, that habit persisted till the end of the British rule in this country.

It is evident from this survey that the disposition to entertain Indian aspirations in a spirit of accommodation was wholly absent both among the officials and the private members of the British community in India. The much-heralded Morley-Minto Reforms did not, therefore, amount to anything. Their authors were themselves categorical in rejecting any suggestion that they

¹⁹ *Modern India and the West*, Edited by L. S. S. O'Malley. Chapter on the Press by W. C. Wadsworth, Director and Assistant Editor of the *Statesman*, p. 190.

²⁰ *India, Minto and Morley*, Lady Minto, Macmillan, 1934, p. 123.

²¹ *An Indian Diary*, Edwin Montagu, Heinemann, 1930, p. 76.

were designed to put India on the road to self-government. Morley, who delighted in describing this country as "that vast congeries of peoples we call India", declared that he would refuse to have anything to do with the constitutional proposals of his own authorship if they led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in this country. He was equally outspoken. "Swaraj," he declared on May 13, 1909, "is an impossibility in our time and for generations." All illusions about the intrinsic worth of the reforms were removed by the frank verdict of the authors of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. They stated that the changes embodied in the Morley-Minto Reforms signified no new policy and that they merely represented a "natural extension of the previously existing system".²²

In fact, the reforms, which crystallised into the Act of 1909, were little more than an attempt to broaden the representation authorised by the Council Act of 1892. At the Centre, the maximum number of members for the Governor-General's Council was raised from sixteen to sixty, while in the provinces of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, the strength was increased from twenty to fifty. The number in the United Provinces was raised from fifteen to fifty. It is true that the principle of election was introduced for the first time, but the concession became a serious liability to the country since it was based on sectional and religious representation. The Act entitled members to move resolutions on the budget and on other subjects, but the basic character of the legislature as a mere deliberative body remained unchanged. The reforms gave no responsibility whatsoever to Indians to administer the affairs of their country.²³

Wholly irrelevant and trivial issues claimed the attention of the policy-makers, provoking some of them into indiscreet and insulting outbursts against Indians. Whether to allow the "native", also called the "foreign element", a place in the Viceroy's Executive Council and in the Council of the Secretary of State became a mighty and world-shaking issue, on which a plethora of public men, including ex-Viceroy, made weighty pronouncements. Even Ripon, who had earlier been accused

²² *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (Montagu-Chelmsford Report), pp. 2, 3.

²³ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. VI, p. 486.

of attempting to sell out India to Indians, was firmly opposed to the intrusion of the "natives" into those exalted places. King Edward was unhappy about the whole episode and confided his resentment to Morley. The agonised soul of Austen Chamberlain sought solace from the myth that foreigners alone could be India's real representatives! "A native," wrote this high priest of imperialism, "was no more a representative of India than the Archbishop of Canterbury was of the Baptists or the unitarians."²⁴ The Secretary of State was equally upset, for, according to Chamberlain, Morley "knew *he would not* submit to be governed by a man of colour" (*Italics Not mine*). But unfortunately for these arbiters of India's destiny, things could not be arranged exactly according to their prejudices and predilections. Much to Morley's chagrin and secret disgust, Krishna Gobinda Gupta and Dr. Syed Hussain Bilgrami were appointed his Councillors in July 1907, while S. P. Sinha, a leading advocate of the Calcutta Bar, became Law Member of the Government of India in March 1909. In terms of transfer of power, these elevations, however, meant nothing.

Nevertheless, when the First World War broke out in 1914, India stood solidly behind Britain. The Viceroy, Lord Hardinge (1910-1916), was a man of broad sympathies and understanding. Short of changing the constitution, which he could not do, he did everything in his power to conciliate Indian opinion and to enlist its co-operation in the war effort. Mahatma Gandhi, a conscientious objector to wars and violence, became a recruiting agent for the armed forces, having persuaded himself that a grateful Britain would appropriately return her debt to India in good time. "I thought," wrote the Mahatma, "that England's need should not be turned into our opportunity and that it was more becoming and far-sighted not to press our demands while the war lasted."²⁵

A chronically poverty-stricken country, India bled herself white in support of Britain. Before peace was declared, more than one and a quarter million men, combatants and non-combatants, had joined the armed forces. The number of combatants alone was 800,000. Well over one million men served

²⁴ *Politics from Inside*, Sir Austen Chamberlain, pp 59, 60.

²⁵ *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiment with Truth*, M. K. Gandhi, Navjivan Press, 1945, p. 425.

abroad, the entire cost of their maintenance being borne by the Indian exchequer. The Punjab's contribution of recruits to the army was the largest. The country's financial sacrifices were equally breath-taking. The Indian legislature unanimously voted £100 million in 1917 towards war expenditure and another £140 million were raised in the shape of war loans. British statesmen, including Sir Austen Chamberlain, expressed their gratitude to India for her magnificent assistance in men and money. Asquith, the Prime Minister, was moved to call Indians "the joint and equal custodians of one common interest and future". Birkenhead, the future Secretary of State, saw in India's sacrifices an impregnable case for keeping this country permanently under British tutelage! He believed with Curzon and many others of his kind, that the sun of the British Empire would set if India became free.

The World War, however, bombed the *status quo* out of existence. New forces and new alignments weakened the primacy of Britain in the comity of nations. It was symptomatic of the changed times that Ishmet Pasha, the representative of defeated Turkey, could defy with impunity the formidable British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, at the conference table. In India, it was considered necessary to placate Indian opinion if not to concede its demands. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State, was eminently qualified to play this role. The language in which he condemned the Indian administration was both forthright and picturesque. It was, he said, "too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too ante diluvian, to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in view". On August 20, 1917, he announced Britain's attitude towards Indian aspirations in these famous words: the policy of the British Government was "that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". He, however, added that progress in that direction could be made only by successive stages and that the Government alone must be "judges of the time and measure of each advance".

Montagu visited India in the autumn of 1917 and, after holding discussions with all shades of Indian opinion, drew up a Report in collaboration with Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy (1916-21). The constitutional proposals embodied in the Report were substantially incorporated into the Government of India Act of 1919. The authors of the reforms scheme claimed that it responded to the spirit of liberty which was "abroad and active", but acted contrary to their own conviction by denying that the reforms were intended to concede self-rule to the Indian people. It was indeed "axiomatic" to them that there could not "be a completely representative and responsible Government of India on an equal footing with the other self-governing units of the British Commonwealth" even if her people fulfilled all the unreasonable stipulations imposed for their eligibility to that status. "The final form of India's constitution," the authors of the Montford Report maintained, "must be evolved out of the conditions of India, and *must be materially affected by the need for securing Imperial responsibilities*" (Italics mine). That indeed was the essence of the scheme and since it was impossible to envisage any period when such a need would cease, it was absurd for India to ask for any time-table for her release from British dominion. In vain did Professor Keith argue that the inclusion of the term "responsible government" in the Declaration of August 1917 irrevocably committed Britain to concede to India the same form of government as existed in the self-governing Dominions and that it was absurd on the part of Curzon, who had drafted the Declaration, to explain away the true implications of the term.²⁶ Protests by Indian liberal statesmen, like Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer, against attempts to whittle down the value of the promise shared the same fate. There was refreshing candour in Birkenhead's verdict on the future of this country. "To me," he wrote, "it is frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government."²⁷

The Montford scheme did not, therefore, take India anywhere near her cherished goal since its only aim was to make a change

²⁶ *A Constitutional History of India*, Arthur Berriedale Keith, Methuen, 1936, pp. 243-44.

²⁷ *Frederick Edwin, Earl of Birkenhead: The Last Phase*, Vol. II, T. Butterworth, 1935, p. 245.

in the *pattern* of government and nothing else. Furthermore, the Reforms, such as they were, were confined to the provinces. For purposes of administration, the government departments were divided into "reserved" and "transferred" subjects. The former were administered by the Governor with the aid of "Council Secretaries", whose position corresponded roughly with that of Under Secretaries in the British Parliament. The subjects that came within the purview of this group were land revenue and laws, justice, police, irrigation and labour. The other section comprised local self-government, education, public health, public works, agriculture and co-operative societies, and was put in charge of ministers who were chosen from among the elected representatives of the provincial legislature. A system of double government or diarchy was thus introduced in the provinces as an initial essay in responsible government.

The Act prescribed that, in relation to transferred subjects, the Governor was to be guided by the advice of his ministers unless he saw sufficient cause to dissent from their opinion. While the Governor held plenary jurisdiction over the entire sector of the administration and while his Councillors were put in charge of key departments, the ministers were condemned to play a limited role in the government. With no control over the reserved subjects and with little scope for any dynamic activity in their own departments, they found themselves in an invidious position analogous to that of a second-class citizen. The lamentations of Sir K. V. Reddi, a Madras minister under the Montford dispensation, were truly pathetic. "The position of ministers," wrote the Simon Commission, "is that they are members of the Executive Government, and not members of the Executive Council." This was "double government" with a vengeance!

The Centre was wholly unaffected by these innovations, with not even a fig leaf to cover the nakedness of its bureaucratic absolutism. It was given a bi-cameral legislature consisting of a Legislative Assembly and a Council of State. The Assembly was composed of 106 elected and 40 nominated members. Among the latter, 25 were official members. While the Lower House sat for three years, the Council of State, with its 61 members, was elected for a period of five years. The composi-

tion of the Upper House ensured the ascendancy of vested interests. The franchise was extremely limited and covered five million people for provincial legislatures, about one million for the Legislative Assembly and a bare 17,000 for the Council of State. Separate electorates were accepted as an indispensable feature of the scheme, although both Montagu and the Joint Report had condemned them as subversive of national unity. The Governor-General remained supreme, untouched by popular influence or control. He continued to discharge his responsibilities with the aid of an Executive Council consisting entirely of hand-picked men. The fact that some of them could be Indians made no difference at all to his unchecked position.

There was thus little in the Montford Reforms to enthuse Indian opinion. Sir C. Y. Chintamani, a minister in the United Provinces, observed: "Our Councils are more like the old Reichstag, of which it was said that it supplied a 'false façade of democracy to a system which was essentially autocratic and bureaucratic'." Dr. Annie Besant, the dynamic founder of the Home Rule League and an indefatigable fighter for Indian freedom, dismissed the Reforms as "unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India". Bishop Whitehead held that the reforms scheme was offered to India forty years too late. Justice delayed, it is said, is justice denied. Perhaps, a similar verdict would make a fitting epitaph on the much-advertised Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

Few discerning men, however, anticipated that the Reforms would go further. They were born in the midst of strife, turmoil and repression and bore few traces of a graceful acknowledgment of India's right to an honoured place among the free nations of the world. It seemed as though Britain's sense of obligation to this country for all its sacrifices during the war ended with the termination of the war. No extraordinary situation had arisen in 1918 to justify the introduction of repressive measures, like the Criminal Law Amendment Bills, better known as the Rowlatt Bills, in the Imperial Legislative Council. The earnest appeals of leaders like Sir Surendranath Banerjea and the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri to the Government not to defy public opinion were ignored and the unpopular Bills were passed into law. Thinking men wondered how India

could expect to receive her freedom from Britain if even her modest demands could be dismissed so summarily. The need for a leader who could provide a corrective to such an attitude through mass action was widely felt. The advent of Mahatma Gandhi to Indian politics was, therefore, not an accident of history, but marked the fulfilment of the country's long-felt necessity.

In February 1919, Gandhi organised a *satyagraha* campaign to protest against the Rowlatt Act, with its sweeping powers of arrest and detention, and thus furnished a foretaste of what could be expected from his leadership in the coming years. Jawaharlal Nehru, young, mettlesome and impatient at the passive politics of the country, was relieved and happy when he saw in the Mahatma a man of action *par excellence*. "Here at last," wrote Nehru in his Autobiography, "was a way out of the tangle, a method of action which was straight and open and possibly effective." How distant and how futile the era of prayer and petition now seemed! In Gandhi, the bureaucracy soon discovered an adversary who taught his people to face repression without fear and to treat it as a derelict instrument.

The Government committed a blunder by arresting Gandhi on April 9, 1919, and by deporting on the following day Drs. Kitchlew and Satyapal, the popular leaders of the Punjab. Since the war, the mood of the people of that province had been sullen and resentful. By employing press-gang methods in order to swell the ranks of the recruits to the armed services, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, had ruthlessly exploited the "sword arm" of India and driven it to the verge of collapse. The Punjab had furnished 110,000 fighting men in the first two years of the war, while up to the date of the armistice the total recruitment, both combatant and non-combatant, from that region, was as much as half a million. There was widespread discontent among the people, which the Governor, described by Montagu as the "idol of the reactionary forces", was utterly incompetent to assuage. The activities of patriotic organisations, like the *ghadr* party, had helped to deepen their resentment and the arrest of their leaders on April 10 supplied the spark that set the Punjab ablaze. Police firing on a crowd of demonstrators, resulting in some deaths, aggravated an already dangerous situation. A

violent mob retaliated and in its unbridled fury killed five Europeans. A lady missionary, called Miss Sherwood, was set upon in the streets of Amritsar and severely beaten. Every section of responsible opinion in India, however, condemned these crimes in unreserved language.

In such a situation, the duty of the Government was clear. Conciliation, and not repression, was the need of the hour, but the Governor and other bureaucrats spurned any such statesmanlike course and attempted to crush the spirit of nationalism in the Punjab.²⁸ Martial law was imposed in the province between the 15th and the 20th of April 1919. On April 12, General Dyer issued orders prohibiting all public meetings in the city of Amritsar, but never cared to verify whether his directives had been sufficiently publicised. Evidently, they had not been, for, on the following day a crowd of twenty thousand persons, which included many children and infants, assembled in an enclosed rectangular piece of unused land, known as Jallianwala Baug, with only one access to the open space. Accompanied by 150 soldiers, Dyer marched to the meeting place in order "to do all men to death till they were going to continue the meeting". Unmoved by the presence of children and blocking the only exit with his soldiers, Dyer ordered the trapped crowds to disperse and vacate the Baug within three minutes! Since this was impossible, he ordered his men to fire at point-blank range. The Hunter Committee ascertained that in all 1,650 rounds were emptied into the crowds and, according to Dyer's own testimony, even more rounds would have been fired if they had been available at the time. Investigations by an unofficial body revealed that the holocaust claimed as many as one thousand lives.²⁹

Other happenings in the Punjab, though less brutal, were equally tragic and frightening since they showed that the distance between the people and the Government, far from

²⁸ Resentment at O'Dwyer's tyranny persisted long after his retirement from India. On March 18, 1940, he died at the hands of an Indian in London, while attending a meeting of the East India Association at Caxton Hall, Westminster. He was seventy-five at the time of his death.

²⁹ *Report of the Commissioners appointed by the Punjab Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress, 1920*, p. 57. The Committee consisted of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Pandit Motilal Nehru, M. K. Gandhi, C. R. Das, Abbas S. Tyabji, M. R. Jayakar and K. Santanam.

shortening, was actually increasing. It was monstrous on the part of General Dyer to order the inhabitants of Amritsar to crawl on their bellies like reptiles in the street where Miss Sherwood had been attacked by some miscreants. The arbitrary arrest and the handcuffing of influential Indians like Dr. Manoharlal, the future Finance Minister of the Punjab Government, the insistence that white men should be saluted in "acknowledgment" of their alleged superiority, the seizure of motor cars from private individuals for the use of British officers, the cruel treatment of students at Lahore, the high-handed behaviour of the district officers towards the school-going population of Gujranwalla, the birth-place of Ranjit Singh, and the resort to aerial bombing in order to terrorise the countryside, were some of the acts of official frenzy. While O'Dwyer, the Governor, approved and encouraged these excesses, the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, watched them from the cool heights of Simla with complete unconcern.

Under a juster dispensation, men like General Dyer would have forfeited their lives, but they were lionised and acclaimed as heroes. Dyer had the temerity to tell the Hunter Committee that he ordered the butchery at the Jallianwala Baug in order to create a "wide impression" and "a great moral effect" upon the people. "For me," he declared "the battlefield of France or Amritsar is the same." For massacring unarmed citizens, this great warrior was presented a sword of honour and a purse of £26,000 both in India and England, while the House of Lords exonerated him. The debates in the two Houses of Parliament left no one in doubt that not much value was attached to Indian lives.³⁰ In his written statement to the Hunter Committee, General Drake-Brockman declared: "Force is the only thing that an Asiatic has any respect for."³¹

Both the Punjab happenings and the pronouncements in their defence, besides calling for serious reflection, made it abundantly clear that the spirit of racialism that had provoked the opposition to the Ilbert Bill of 1883 was still a dominating factor in the relations of the British rulers with the Indian

³⁰ *Enlist India for Freedom!* Edward Thompson, Gollancz, 1940, pp. 18, 19

³¹ *Report of the Committee appointed by the Government of India to investigate the disturbances in the Punjab, etc.* (Hunter Committee), 1920, p. 116.

people. Perhaps, even more alarming was the revelation that no weapon was considered undesirable in dealing with the challenge of Indian nationalism. The Punjab atrocities, however, outraged the sentiments of all decent men even in far-off lands. Churchill characterised Dyer's action as "frightfulness", while the French statesman, Clemenceau, told Bishop Whitehead during his visit to India that "there must be no more Amritsars" since that was not the way the country could be governed.

In the country itself a sharp anger spread among the people, reminding them how helpless they were in their own homes. On May 30, 1919, Poet Tagore returned his Knighthood to the Viceroy, saying that such tokens of honour had now turned into "badges of shame". The speeches of men like the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at the Imperial Conferences in 1921 and 1923 revealed in all their vividness that the position of their countrymen in the community of free nations was none too honourable.³² *The Cambridge History* truly reflected the opinion of contemporary India when it declared that, "despite all her sacrifices in the cause of victory, she got, not peace, but a sword". A new challenge was thus posed to Indian nationalism and it was accepted with growing confidence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. But before we move into the Gandhian era, it would be profitable to examine the gravity of the problems that confronted the country.

³² *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, Prof. W. K. Hancock, Vol. I, Oxford, 1937, p. 170.

7. THE SERVICES

THE system of civil services introduced by the British in India was among the best the country had ever before. It was a product of historical necessity and grew with the expansion of the Empire. For more than one and a half centuries after receiving its Charter, the East India Company did not have to send out civil administrators to India since its activities during that long period were primarily concerned with trade. Its servants were factors and writers, from whom no exacting standards of moral rectitude or mental abilities were demanded. In fact, the Directors preferred only men of inferior ability. It was clearly impossible to transmute such dross into gold when the need for revenue collectors and judges arose after Plassey. The fact that salaries were low did not discourage needy men from Britain from descending upon her Indian possessions since the privilege of private trading gave them unlimited opportunities for personal gains. It required a man of Lord Cornwallis' probity and prestige to combat the widespread evil of corruption in the Company's service. He was largely responsible for the establishment of the covenanted civil service which eventually emerged as a splendid instrument of government. Cornwallis, however, rendered a grave disservice to Indians by excluding them from all positions carrying emoluments of £500 and above a year. The injustice was remedied later, but the evil consequences of his misjudgment of Indian character and capabilities persisted till the end of British rule in this country.

The history of British Indian civil services abounds in illustrious names. Till his death in 1811 as Governor of Bombay, Jonathan Duncan served India in varied capacities and his devoted labours in the cause of the country brought lustre to his name and honour to his profession. The nineteenth century was rich in such men who sincerely loved and respected Indians and their culture. Munro emphatically disapproved of any policy or measure that sought to discriminate against them. He chided the champions of racial superiority by declaring, with

all the authority derived from his long experience, that Europe had many lessons to learn from India. "If civilization," he wrote, "is to become an article of trade between the two countries, I am convinced that this country (Britain) will gain by the import cargo."¹ Mountstuart Elphinstone, who had few equals in his knowledge of the Maratha country and its people, was clear in his mind about the ultimate destiny of India and predicted with remarkable confidence that she would be ready to take a large share in the responsibilities of government within a half-century. Charles Metcalfe, another British Indian statesman, subordinated his personal interest to public duty by his dignified and firm stand in his controversy with the self-willed Governor-General, Lord Hastings, over the Palmer scandal in Hyderabad. This great man, who incurred the wrath of the home authorities by liberating the press from excessive official control, had also no doubt in his mind that Britain's stay in this country could not be any more than a sojourn. Malcolm, a man of great sagacity and humility, Close and Tod of the same generation, worked like Trojans, not only for the greater glory of their own motherland, but also for the rehabilitation of India. The names of administrators like Sir Henry Lawrence and his gifted subordinates in the Punjab, after the overthrow of the Sikh power, and Sir Mark Cubban, the maker of modern Mysore, will always be associated with efficient and benevolent government.

Lord Wellesley, whose vast annexations created the need for an increasing number of trained administrators, founded a college at Fort William in July 1800 where youngmen coming from Britain almost in a destitute condition, both mentally and materially, were given a good grounding in their future responsibilities. The College was, however, short-lived and was replaced in 1806 by another institution, known as the East India College. Situated at Haileybury, it gave training for two years to youths that had received nominations. Till its closure in January 1858, the Haileybury College served the useful purpose of providing "a supply of persons duly qualified to discharge the various and important duties required from the civil servants of the Company in administering the government of India".

¹ *British Attitudes Towards India 1784-1858*, George D. Bearce, Oxford, 1961, pp. 124-25.

In India, the scope for the general administrator to do useful work was almost unlimited both during the Company government and thereafter. The Collector was the pivot of the administration and enjoyed considerable influence and prestige among the people. It was part of his duty, not only to know the language of the district well, but also to tour his charge extensively. In the former Presidency of Bombay, for example, an Assistant Collector was required to be on out-door duty for 210 days in a year. In the countryside, the tent and the horse became familiar symbols of the district administration so that it could be truly said for the District Collector that the tent was mightier than the pen. There were 269 districts in the pre-partitioned India, the average size of a district being 4,075 square miles, with a population of about one million. This was the domain of the Collector where he reigned supreme. Despite their foreign origin and different outlook, there was a remarkable eagerness on the part of the district officers to remain in close and continuous contact with the people. It will do much good to India if this excellent tradition is maintained and strengthened.

Nevertheless, the system had an inherent limitation which no administrator or body of administrators, however well-meaning, sympathetic and competent, could overcome. The civil servant was the representative of the security State and of paternal government and, whatever his own predilections, it was imperative that he should play the role of providence to the people. The belief that Britain had to remain in India for ever played no small part in conditioning the mind and the outlook of the civil servant so that, especially after the Mutiny, the Service hardened into a close corporation and became aggressively conscious of its rights, privileges and immunities. Like the imperial handymen, it studiously invented or believed in myths about India and her people. Sir John Strachey's observations on this country illustrate this point with admirable vividness. He wrote: "This is the first and most essential thing to learn about India that there is not, and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious; no Indian nation, no 'people

of India', of which we hear so much." ² The India of history and geography, the India of a great and venerable civilization and of many other things that count for much in the affairs of men did not, according to this view, exist at all, the only real thing about *it* being its perpetual need for British dominion and protection. In the light of such obsessions, it was idle to expect that the promises of a fair deal given to Indians in statutes like the Charter Act of 1833 could be easily implemented.

Unhappily for imperialism, time is its inexorable enemy. As the Company gained continental sovereignty, it became obvious to its Directors that the system of nomination to the covenanted service called for replacement by another which ensured the supply of really intelligent and competent administrators. In 1853, they accordingly introduced the system of open competition, the aim of the innovation being to secure for the Indian Civil Service youngmen who had "received the best, the most liberal, the most finished education that this country (England) affords". The examination covered "most of the subjects of the honour schools of the Universities of Great Britain and Ireland". Macaulay lent his powerful support to the competitive system and the first examination under it was held in 1855. The way was thus cleared for the admission of Indians to the great sanctum of the I.C.S. and the first Indian to achieve this distinction was Satyendranath Tagore, a brother of the Poet. Seven years after Tagore's admission in 1864, four more Indians, namely, Surendranath Banerjea, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Beharilal Gupta and Shripad Babaji Thakur, followed his example. Thus, both in theory and in law, if not in practice, Indians could rise to any position in the gift of the British Government in this country. Till then all covenanted posts had, as a rule, been held by Europeans, although William Bentinck attempted to mitigate the injustice by throwing open the office of Deputy Collector to Indians. By another legislation, passed in 1843, they were also given the posts of deputy magistrates, but all those situations were much inferior to the covenanted service.

The policy-makers, however, soon found themselves assailed by grave doubts and fears about the consequences of throwing the portals of the I.C.S. open to Indians. The arrangement was

² *India: Its Administration and Progress*, Sir John Strachey, Macmillan, 1911, p. 5.

not exactly compatible with the policy of propagating the myth about the incompetence of Indians to govern themselves. The passing of the examination demanded from them great mental discipline and intellectual abilities, since they had to take their tests under extremely unfavourable conditions. Apart from the fact that they had to contend with an unreasonable age-limit, they were required to sit for the examination in a distant and strange environment, besides having to answer their papers in a foreign tongue. In addition to these handicaps, none of which was trivial, they had to face a formidable competition from the British candidates on their own ground. In view of this, it was impossible to lend even the slightest plausibility to the absurd doctrine about Indian incompetence. Since it was no longer possible to debar Indians from the Service without provoking widespread protest both in India and Britain, other methods were considered necessary in order to prevent them from entering it in large numbers. The Duke of Argyll, Secretary of State, was among the first to realise the need for such action. Commenting on the Act of 1870, which envisaged the admission of Indians to Government service in greater numbers, the Duke said that "the maintenance and stability of our rule must ever be kept in view as the basis of our policy, and to this end a large proportion of British functionaries in the more important posts seems essential". This *obiter dictum* became the basis of British policy in dealing with India's twofold demand for simultaneous examinations and for the fixation of a reasonable age-limit.

Although in 1893 the House of Commons had endorsed by a resolution, moved by Herbert and supported by Dadabhai Naoroji, the proposal for holding the I.C.S. examinations simultaneously in India and Britain, the scheme was never put into operation. The arrangement, it was urged by its critics, would involve the substitution of "different and less desirable qualifications" since the Indian educational institutions were allegedly deficient in the requisite standard. Besides, it would give "undue advantage to some classes which had a facility for examinations and would exclude other important classes altogether"—a statement, the precise import of which it is rather difficult to understand. The Secretary of State, Lord Kimberley, was more candid and could, therefore, be easily understood. It was, he

said, indispensable that an adequate number of the Civil Service should always be Europeans and that "no scheme would be admissible which did not fulfil that essential condition".³ Earlier, the Aitchison Commission and later the Islington Commission endorsed the official point of view, the last named body declaring itself against simultaneous examinations on the ground that they were only a means to an end!

Regulation of the age-limit furnished another effective means for keeping the number of Indians in the Service relatively low. For many years after the introduction of the competitive system in 1855, the minimum and the maximum age prescribed for the candidates was 18 and 22 and remained so till 1864. In fact, from 1855-59 it was 18 and 23. But, as Indians began to enter the Service and gave promise of joining it in increasing numbers, the age-limit was brought down to 17-22 in 1865 and further reduced to 17-21 in the following year and retained at that level till 1878. The plea of Indians for a fair deal was ignored and the age prescription was again modified to their detriment so that from 1879-91 candidates were forced to take their examinations between the ages 17 and 19.

It was an extremely unfair decree, especially when the age-limit recommended for the Civil Service in Britain itself was most liberal. The famous Northcote-Trevelyan Commission, in its report of November 1853, had suggested that the age of admission in the case of candidates for superior situations should, as a general rule, be 19 and 25. There was no great difference in the standard of tests prescribed for the British and the Indian civil services. Protests by the Indian National Congress and by leaders like Gokhale against the severity of the regulations were of no avail.

As a further counter-measure to brilliant Indians getting into the Service in full force and making their influence felt in the administration, a new class of their countrymen, known for their docility and subservience and not quite so well known for their intellectual or educational attainments, were enrolled as civil servants. In 1879, what is known as the Statutory Civil Service was instituted, its members being "youngmen of good family and fair education". These worthies were all nominated by

³ *The Indian Civil Service: 1601-1930*, L. S. S. O'Malley, John Murray, 1931, pp. 219-20

the provincial Governments and, significantly, the first to win this doubtful distinction was Kumar Rameshwar Singh, afterwards the Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga. This great baron of wide acres, however, gave up the post a few years after his nomination. In all, the Government collected sixty-nine such "administrators" before the benighted system was sent into oblivion. There is much wisdom in Sir Edward Blunt's verdict on it: "No more need be said of this service, which was a failure."⁴

Unfortunately, the civil servant gradually lost the flexibility of his mind and transformed himself into an intolerant bureaucrat, enthusiastically making common cause with the policy-makers. In consequence, the bold non-conformist was made to suffer in many ways. Hume, as we have seen, was pre-eminent among the champions of Indian aspirations and paid dearly for his fair-mindedness. He was expelled from the Government during Lytton's regime on the ground that his retirement was "most desirable in the interests of the public service". Commenting on this sorry episode, Hume's biographer, Sir William Wedderburn, himself a distinguished servant of the Indian Government, wrote: "The sons of Zeruiah were too strong for him, and he was cast out from power." Another friend of India, Sir Henry Cotton, was "cheated of the position of Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal due to Lord Curzon's dissatisfaction with him". His Lordship could not forgive Cotton because he had championed the cause of the plantation workers of Assam against their British employers.

Sir William Wedderburn records how the senior members of the bureaucracy became unmitigated self-seekers. India in fact came to be governed by what Lord Bryce calls an "inner oligarchy". Describing the formation of the 'Simla clique', Wedderburn writes: "Thus by a process of natural selection is formed the dominant Simla clique, which controls the Government, disregarding public opinion, and trampling on the rank and file of the service. Naturally enough, the members of this service Junta and their adherents take the pick of official prizes; decorate themselves as a matter of course; and ultimately co-opt each other into the Council of the Secretary of State at Whitehall, where they sit in secret as a Court of Appeal from India,

⁴ *The I.C.S. The Indian Civil Service*, Sir Edward Blunt, Faber & Faber, 1937, p. 50.

and pass favourable judgments on their own past achievements, and those of their friends.”⁵ One wonders whether there was anything in common between such men and those that belonged to the school of Munro, Metcalfe and Elphinstone.

Edwin Montagu wrote in his Diary that proposals for granting political concessions to Indians were extremely unpopular with the officials who exclaimed with one mind “Not in our time O Lord”! Montagu, whose own liberalism was largely confined to speeches and diaries, had no hesitation in recording in the Montford Report: “We are certain that the English members of the services will continue to be as necessary as ever to India”—a point of view that directly conflicted with the prevailing responsible Indian opinion. The memorandum of the nineteen Indian members of the Viceroy’s Council, which included men like D. E. Wacha, Bhupendranath Basu, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M. A. Jinnah and Ibrahim Rahimtoola, and the constitutional scheme prepared by the Congress and the Muslim League in December 1916, were firmly opposed to the dominance of the Indian administration by the British bureaucrat. “I know of no class of men,” wrote Sir C. Y. Chintamani, a minister under the Montford scheme, “who are more skilled than the permanent officials in defeating reform in detail.”⁶

Generous safeguards were provided in the Act of 1919 to ensure the predominance of the British element in the Indian Civil Service, but many men lost their heart and chose to go home. Realising that the role of the ‘guardian’ was no longer open to them or to their successors, they considered it prudent “to seek some other career for their sons, even if they cared to stay to the end of their normal years of service”⁷ Thanks to the Reforms, about one-tenth of the whole number elected to retire prematurely on a proportionate pension. Those that remained, says Sir Edward Blunt, “lost, for a while, a part of their former zeal and their former driving power”. This was an alarming development in the eyes of the policy-makers who spared no efforts to revive the drooping spirit of the civil servant. The recommendations of the Lee Commission in 1924 went a long way towards placating him. The Commission suggested that,

⁵ *Allan Octavian Hume*, Sir William Wedderburn, T. Fisher Unwin, 1913, pp. 129-30.

⁶ *Indian Politics since the Mutiny*, C. Y. Chintamani, p. 30.

⁷ *A Constitutional History of India*, A. B. Keith, 1936, p. 297.

out of every one hundred Civil Service posts, forty were to be reserved for the British and a similar number for Indians by direct recruitment, while the balance were to go to officials drawn from the provincial service. It was hoped that on this basis parity would be established in the numbers of the two elements within a period of fifteen years.

The White Paper of March 15, 1933, embodying a complete scheme of constitutional reforms for India, declared that "all persons appointed by the Secretary of State in Council have certain important rights. It is intended to safeguard these rights and to extend them to all persons appointed by the Secretary of State after the commencement of the Constitutional Act". The Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform was even more generous and presented a comprehensive list of conditions to be secured for the members of the Service, thereby seeking to create an *imperium et imperio* for their benefit. Sir Samuel Hoare, who, as Secretary of State, piloted the India Bill till its third reading in Parliament, was most persevering in insulating the Service from the jurisdiction of popular ministers. Speaking at the Indian Civil Service Dinner on June 9, 1932, he assured his audience that the British Government was "going to keep in the letter and in the spirit every contract that has been made with you as with every other Indian Service". The provisions of the Act of 1935 proved that Hoare's was not an empty promise.

The Service continued to be the *corps d'elite* among the country's public services and contained many splendid administrators of the highest competence. But the fact that they felt the need for safeguards and guarantees, coupled with the mounting tempo of nationalism in the country, inevitably affected the outlook and temper of the majority of them. The alien character of the system became increasingly pronounced. Professor Edward Thompson wrote in 1940 that even at that date "not one European Member of the Viceroy's Council knew either Gandhi or Nehru, who are known to countless people in every civilized world. I could name many other high officials in the same case. A Governor who is both able and democratic in outlook told me 'I hate the fact that I must leave India

without having met either Gandhi or Nehru. I admire them greatly' ".⁸

In these circumstances, the large exodus of British officers from India on the eve of her independence was not surprising. Notwithstanding the Lee Commission's recommendations, their number was still considerable. In 1939, the date-line fixed for attaining numerical parity between the two elements in the Service, out of a total strength of 1,299 I.C.S. men, 759 were British and 540 Indians. The number of Indians and Anglo-Indians promoted from the provincial service to the "listed posts" in that year was 85.⁹ Nearly all key positions were still held by the British; for instance, in 1939, they were in preponderating numbers in the Secretariat—147 as against 71 Indians. The premature retirement of an overwhelming number of British officers from the Indian service in 1947 can only be attributed to their inability to see what great opportunities lay before them to revive the traditions of devoted public service that had been such a distinguishing feature of the activities of their predecessors in the pre-reforms era. Free India would have welcomed the stay of many of them since in the troubled years that lay before her she would certainly have benefited from their experience. Those that remained had no regrets.¹⁰

In writing the epitaph on the Indian Civil Service, we cannot but express our admiration for the ability and thoroughness with which its officers administered the affairs of this country. In fact, the soundness of its foundations made it possible for free India to build up a new system of public services. Partition and independence in 1947 resulted in the exit of some 700 European and Muslim officers out of a total of 1,150 civil servants. This tremendous depletion in the ranks of an essential service was, however, made good through emergency recruitment in 1948. The Indian Administrative Service has now taken the place of the famous steel frame. Recruitment to the I.A.S. and the Indian Police Service is made through all-India competitive

⁸ *Enlist India for Freedom!* Edward Thompson, Gollancz, 1940, p. 43.

⁹ *The Men who Ruled India: The Guardians*, Philip Woodruff, Jonathan Cape, 1954, p. 363.

¹⁰ A popular British I.C.S. officer, who retired in 1961, told the present writer that he was perfectly happy under the new dispensation. He also disclosed that the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Deputy Prime Minister, would have very much liked a good number of British officers to remain in this country.

examinations, while other arrangements exist for the supply of officers to the Judiciary. The Indian administrator today has much heavier responsibilities to shoulder, both in volume and variety, since he has to serve, not a security State but a welfare State. But the burden is lightened by the knowledge that he is no longer torn between two loyalties, as his predecessors under British rule were. As A. D. Gorwala, a distinguished retired civilian, so felicitously puts it, "in the double duty of the past to the British Crown and to the Indian people, there was room for confusion", but now in free India, "by the grace of God", there is none.

Even more formidable than an unbending bureaucracy was Britain's military policy in India. The aim of that policy was to ensure the permanence of British dominion in this country and to use the armed services as an integral part of the imperial defence system. A progressive demilitarization of the people by stigmatizing them as unwarlike, recruitment of only those classes who could, it was fondly hoped, render implicit obedience to their superiors, an unwearying propaganda that Indians could never make efficient commissioned officers, and the assertion that the British personnel in the Army would be indispensable for an indefinite period to protect India from herself and her external enemies, became the cardinal features of the military policy. It was not considered necessary to remember that the Company's conquest of the south was accomplished with an army consisting predominantly of men drawn from the south-western sea-board and from the Tamil and Telugu districts. Nor was it convenient to recall that the non-admission of Indians to officer ranks was a later development. "The names of Muhammad Yusuf, Jamal Saheb and others," says a British writer, "fill a page of history scarcely less memorable than that which sets forth the exploits of our own Forde, Caillaud and Coote." In those days, there was no prejudice against British troops being led by Indian officers.

Much of this happy state of affairs was, however, changed with the advent of Cornwallis who, having queered the pitch for Indians in the covenanted civil service, proceeded to spread the poison of suspicion and racial discrimination in the army administration. It was, he declared, unwise to depend upon "native regiments". It was, therefore, imperative to have the counter-

poise of "a large and well-regulated body of Europeans" in order to ensure the security of the British possessions in this country. An inevitable consequence of this policy of distrust was the total exclusion of Indians from officer ranks.¹¹ Discerning men like Munro and Malcolm disapproved of the new practice of packing the officer cadre with imported men, which seriously hampered the growth of a spirit of comradeship in the army between the British and the Indian personnel. The gravity of this blunder became evident during the Sepoy Mutiny.

The uprising of 1857 marked a turning-point in the military history of British India. It determined the authorities to adopt the most stringent measures for preventing the recurrence of armed revolts of any kind. For the first time in their history, the people of India were divided into fighting and non-fighting races in complete disregard of well-known facts and the British Indian Government's own experience. All the three Presidency armies felt the weight of the new policy. In 1856, one year before the rebellion, the Bengal Army consisted of seventy-four infantry regiments, with ten regiments of regular and eighteen of irregular cavalry, and was more numerous than the other two armies together. In the early years of its formation, it drew its recruits largely from the province whose name it bore, but from 1776 onwards its man-power was mostly derived from the districts of the United Provinces. Brahmins and Rajputs comprised an overwhelming majority among the enlisted men and were described as "a brave and manly race of people". Following the Mutiny, in which the Bengal Army took the most active part, the fate of these fine fighting men was sealed. The Brahmin, with his social prestige and intellectual alertness, and the Rajput, with his aristocratic origin and traditions, made a formidable combination that did not augur well for the safety of the Raj. They certainly did not rebel in 1857 out of any patriotic motives, but their capacity for catching that contagion was enormous. Most of the regiments that had mutinied were, therefore, disbanded and their place was given to soldiers drawn

¹¹ European soldiers of fortune were also admitted to the Company's armies but were seldom raised to officer ranks. The case of Bernadotte, a French adventurer, is remarkable. This man, who served in the Madras European Regiment, was not given a commission, but rose to become a Marshal of France and King of Sweden! *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. VI, p. 158.

from the Punjab and other parts of north and north-west India. But the enormity of the proceedings was not entirely lost on the policy-makers. "It is distressing to think," declared Lord Ellenborough, "that we must abandon the hope of ever seeing a native army composed like that we have lost. It was an army which under a general it loved and trusted, would have marched victorious to the Dardanelles." Thenceforward a great part of the United Provinces, now known as Uttar Pradesh, was condemned as militarily sterile.

Madras and Bombay fared no better, although their part in the uprising was negligible. "India," declared Norman Angell, "was conquered by Britain with the man-power supplied by Indians." As we saw earlier, the bulk of that man-power came from the south during the foundation of her dominion in this country. And yet, after the Mutiny, when the services and valour of the southern soldier were no longer required, he was unjustly dismissed as unwarlike. Such a charge was indignantly rejected by many fair-minded British officers, including the Commander-in-Chief of the Madras Army, Sir Frederick Haines, who said "I cannot admit for one moment that anything has occurred to disclose the fact that the Madras sepoy is inferior as a fighting man". By a superb display of skill and courage during the First and the Second World Wars, the Madras soldier proved to the policy-makers how cruelly he had been wronged by being stigmatised as unwarlike. Writing in the *Journal of the United Service Institution of India* for April 1945, Major F. Yeats-Brown spoke in rapturous terms about the abilities of the south Indian as a fighting-man and said that the Madras pioneers fought like tigers in the last war. In October of that year, Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief in India, congratulated Madras on giving a "very great number of fine artillery regiments for our new army". Indians, it will be recalled, were not allowed in the artillery and other scientific departments of the Army till the last war.

It required a good deal of effrontery on the part of the authorities to tell the Marathas that they were incapable of bearing arms even after they had inflicted defeats on the British and later allowed themselves to be overcome largely on account of their political imbecility. Panikkar is fully justified when he writes: "The Marathas, who had shown outstanding mili-

tary ability and valour, ceased to be counted as being martial as they had a marked sense of nationalism and could not be isolated from the rest of the community.”¹² Sir Richard Temple’s letter to Lytton, quoted in an earlier chapter, fully supports this point of view.

In fact, Temple’s evidence before the Eden Commission of 1878-79 makes it abundantly clear why the fictitious demarcation of the Indian population into martial and non-martial communities was adopted. “In India under British rule,” he explained, “the former martial tendencies of the native population gradually became lessened till they almost disappear and this circumstance is considered to be one of the safeguards of our rule. So conscious has the Government been of this, that within the present generation the native population has been generally disarmed, that is, the people have been enjoined to give up arms.”¹³ The centres of recruitment were duly shifted to the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Rajasthan and Nepal, allowing only a negligible number of soldiers to be drawn from parts of Uttar Pradesh, the Deccan, the Central Provinces and Madras. None from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam were admitted into the armed services. The Sikhs, the Punjabi Muslims, the Baluchis, the Frontier Pathans, the Gurkhas and the Rajputs became the favourite classes for purposes of recruitment. The Government saw no enormity in going outside the Indian frontiers in order to secure recruits to an army miscalled Indian. There were 17,000 such foreigners when Sir Abdur Rahim and other Members of the Indian Military College Committee, 1931, protested against the procedure in their Minute of Dissent.

The preferred classes were encouraged to despise education and to look down upon all intellectual pursuits as belonging to the fraternity of *babus* or clerks. They were also taught to view with disgust any prospect, though none too bright or near at the time, of being led by Indian commissioned officers, no matter to which class or community they belonged. It would have been a ‘phenomenon’, says a British writer, if the system

¹² *Asia and Western Dominance*, K. M. Panikkar, p. 113.

¹³ *Indian Military College Committee*, 1931, Government of India Publication Branch; Minute by Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer and Major-General Raja Ganpat Rao Raghunath Rao Rajwade, Inspector-General of Gwalior Army, p. 96.

adopted by the authorities in the training of the Indian soldier "developed in him any capacity for leadership at all".

The Government's hold on the army was indeed absolute. The presence of a large number of British troops on Indian soil, the absolute control exercised by the British on the army policy, the total exclusion of Indians from officer ranks and from the artillery, and the unceasing propaganda about the alleged unfitness of Indians to bear arms, were singly and in combination formidable deterrents to any armed uprising and yet the search for greater security was never relaxed. The Reports of the Peel Commission of 1858-59, the Eden Commission of 1878-79 and the Army in India Committee of 1912-13 were all unanimous in proclaiming their distrust of Indian troops. Giving evidence before the first-named expert body, Sir John Lawrence, though generally well-disposed towards this country, emphasized the importance of using the weapon of counterpoise to prevent Indian soldiers of different regiments from coming together. He declared that next to the "grand counterpoise of a sufficient European force" came a "counterpoise of natives against natives".

Again, the myth that Indians were incapable of fighting well unless led by British officers was repeated *ad nauseam* in order to lend credibility to it. "It is this consciousness," declared Lord Roberts, "of the inherent superiority of the European which has won for us India. However well-educated and clever a native may be, and however brave he may have proved himself, I believe that no rank that we could bestow upon him would cause him to be considered as an equal by the British officer or looked up to by the last-joined British subaltern." Such insolent assertions could be made with impunity only because it was not open to Indians at the time to pay back in kind.

Nothing could be more grotesque than the claim that, while any man from England could come to India with the baton of a Field Marshal tucked into his haversack, Indians could never aspire to rise even to the lowest rank in the officer cadre. It was as though they had not waged wars or led armies before men like Roberts drew up their indictments against them.

Fair-minded experts were not slow to repudiate the doctrine of British superiority. General Macmunn declared that, if an

its proposals by declaring that "it has yet to be proved that any body of officers drawn largely from other classes of the community will prove equal in soldierly quality to the Indian officers of the old type", that is, the V.C.O.s. The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Rawlinson, who evidently inspired these views, gave wider currency to the canard that Indian troops of the so-called martial classes would never allow themselves to be led by Indian officers belonging to other classes. He also held that three generations would be required to "produce Indian officers of the right kind"—a point of view that was heartily endorsed by the Viceroy. In other words, British officers and men would have to remain in India till the end of time in order to perform garrison duties in this country.

The Shea Committee also recommended the adoption of the notorious Eight-Unit scheme, the object of which was to segregate Indian commissioned officers from their British counterparts as a safeguard against the latter having to take their orders from their Indian seniors. Such a contingency was no longer avoidable, with the admission of the nationals of this country to officer ranks, albeit in restricted numbers. The "humiliation" of British juniors having to serve under them could be avoided only by reserving certain units to be officered exclusively by Indians. The racial basis of the scheme was sought to be explained away by the absurd argument that it had been devised as a safeguard against a possible decline in efficiency affecting the entire armed services due to the intrusion of Indians into the officer cadre. The Army Secretary, however, candidly declared on the floor of the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1928 that racialism was at the root of the Eight-Unit scheme. The expert Committee, appointed in 1925 under the chairmanship of Major-General Sir Andrew Skeen, with ten Indians as members, vainly recommended the abolition of this unjust scheme; the policy of segregation continued till 1940.

The Simon Commission, on which the future Labour Prime Minister of Britain served, recorded all the familiar clichés about the Indian defence problems and added its own in full measure. It declared with absolute finality that control over the Army would never be transferred to an Indian minister so long as British soldiers remained in this country. Besides, the need to exercise the obligations of paramountcy over the Indian princes

demanding that the Crown should not divest itself of the only means by which it could fulfil its responsibilities.¹⁷ Leaders of Indian opinion categorically rejected such arguments and gave full and frank expression to their point of view at the Round Table Conferences in London. Led by stalwarts like Sapru, Jayakar, Moonje and Jinnah, the Indian delegation made a concerted demand for a speedy nationalisation of the officer ranks and for a progressive transfer of the defence administration to popularly-elected Indian ministers. Jinnah asked for categorical assurances from the British Government on these issues, brushing aside all nicely-worded platitudes. "I feel," declared Mahatma Gandhi, "that a nation that has no control over its own defence affairs and over its own external policy, is hardly a responsible nation." Thanks to the pressure of these leaders, the Defence Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference recommended that "the defence of India must to an increasing extent be the concern of the Indian people and not the British Government alone". To give effect to this affirmation of policy, steps were to be taken to "increase substantially the rate of Indianization in the Indian Army".

The Indian Military College Committee, 1931, was appointed to make recommendations for the establishment of a military training college in the country to facilitate the admission of a sufficient number of young Indians into the officer ranks. Till then only twenty vacancies were offered to Indians at Sandhurst, the selection of candidates being largely in favour of the scions of wealthy families. The Committee, which was presided over by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Philip Chetwode, was required to submit a scheme that would enable competent and ambitious Indians to choose an Army career in increasing numbers. But the task assigned to it was exactly like asking the goat to guard the cabbage! The appointment of such a body was an obvious superfluity, for, as Chetwode himself told the non-official members, both the Governments of India and Britain had already taken a decision on the number of cadets to be trained in the proposed college! The official members, whose views alone prevailed, favoured the training of only sixty candidates a year—a recommendation that was flatly in defiance of the R.T.C. deci-

¹⁷ *Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II, Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1930, pp. 168-69.

sions. The Indian members of the Committee were furious. In their Minute of Dissent, Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyer and General Rajwade declared with some heat: "If the Empire had to face the danger of another World War on the same scale as the Great War, there can be little doubt that England would be obliged to train India for her own defence within a much shorter period." It is sad to reflect that nothing was done to disprove this grim prophecy.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee, whose recommendations led to the framing of the Government of India Act of 1935, waxed philosophical over the country's defence problems. "There are," it declared, "some things which even an Act of Parliament cannot do. It is subdued to what it works in, and spiritual values are beyond its scope." With so many imponderables of its own imagination to contend with, the Committee had no hesitation in declaring that it was "impossible to include in the Constitution Act or in any other statute a provision for the complete Indianization of the Army within a specified period of time". The Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, who could be trusted to out-Herod Herod, stated it as an axiom that until India was in a position to defend herself "our command of the Army must be clear and undisputed". The provisions in the Act of 1935 faithfully reflected these points of view and gave Indians no share at all in the responsibility for the defence of their hearths and homes.

This, in brief, is the story of Britain's army policy in India from the day she set out to conquer this country till the outbreak of the Second World War. It was a policy that nursed many iniquities and inefficiencies since it so stubbornly shunned Indian talent and ability. The equipment employed by the Indian Army was outmoded and useless. There was an enormous backlog in its rehabilitation and modernisation and belated supplies of money from Britain could not wipe out the arrears. When the war broke out in Europe, the armed forces in this country were good only for guarding the North-West Frontier and for maintaining internal peace.

The Second World War upset many things far more effectively than the first did. It freed India from the trammels of a military policy from which she had no other means of escape. Indeed, nothing now remained in the hands of the arbiters of her destiny.

The failure of Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to India in 1942, mostly on the issue of the transfer of the Defence portfolio to an Indian minister, demonstrated how old prejudices die hard. But it did not deflect the course of events because Britain's predilections even on the wider issue of India's independence were no longer of much consequence. It was absurd to believe that the British Empire could remain unshaken when new convulsive forces were rapidly changing the fate of mankind. Nor could the Indian in the armed forces be taken for granted any longer. The spirit of patriotism had penetrated deep into his ranks and nothing that was said or done in disparagement of Gandhi and the Congress could shake it. This was demonstrated as early as 1930 when the men of the Second Battalion of 18th Royal Garhwali Rifles flatly refused to fire on a gathering of nationalists at Peshawar. The formation of the Indian National Army during the war under Subhas Chandra Bose clearly indicated how the wind was blowing. The mutiny of the naval ratings in Bombay in February 1946 left few discerning men in doubt that the end of the Raj was in sight.

The expansion of the armed forces in India attained phenomenal proportions during the war. On October 1, 1939, that is, shortly after the war began in Europe, the strength of the land forces in the country was only 352,213, consisting of 205,038 regular troops of the Indian Army, 63,469 British troops and 83,706 miscellaneous troops, including the Indian States Forces. The Royal Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force were still in their infancy and languished without any hope of shedding their swaddling-clothes, the numerical strength of their personnel being 2,012 and 1,628 respectively. A narrow-minded and suicidal military policy, an inadequate appreciation of the imminence of a global conflict, the difficulties of equipping the Services with modern weapons, and the grave political unrest in the country at first served as a serious deterrent to the development of the armed forces to the required level of efficiency and preparedness.

Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands of India's youngmen enlisted themselves enthusiastically in the armed services once the absurd and obnoxious doctrine of martial and non-martial races was abandoned and the officer ranks were thrown wide open to them. It became increasingly evident to Whitehall that, thanks to the war, it was no longer possible or wise on its part to treat

the Government of India as its docile and obsequious agent in the vital matter of raising new armies. Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, was quick to see the signs of the times and wrote to the Secretary of State in 1941 about the imperative need for according equal treatment to Indian officers since any discrimination against them would lead to the loss of the best of them.¹⁸ By the end of the war in 1945, the strength of the Indian Army reached the gigantic figure of 2,647,017 which included 240,615 of the British Army and 21,633 of the Burma Army.

The increase in the number of Indian officers was equally striking. While on October 1, 1939, their number was only 396, it rose to the astounding figure of 8,340 on September 1, 1945.¹⁹ The expansion of the other two arms of the Services, namely, the navy and the air force, though less spectacular, was also substantial. The change in Britain's attitude towards India's defence problem was best reflected in the observations of the Commander-in-Chief who told the cadets at Dehra Dun that there was no longer "such a thing as the British officer or the Indian officer in the Indian Army now; there were just officers". He went a step further on October 22, 1945, when he announced the decision of the Government of India, in agreement with the British Government, to restrict the future grant of permanent Commissions in the Indian armed forces only to Indians. Thus, only an overwhelming compulsion of events helped to transform the armed services of India into a truly national defence organisation.

¹⁸ *Auchinleck: A Biography of Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck*, John Cornell, 1959, p. 189. Auchinleck's sense of fair-play was attributed to the fact that he did not belong to what his biographer calls "the inner, ruling-class circles which still exercised a predominant influence in the British Army".

¹⁹ *Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisation* (official history of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-45), General Editor: Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad, Orient Longmans, 1956, p. 182.

8. PRINCELY INDIA

A VAST medley of principalities, noteworthy as much for their number and variety as for the uniqueness of their political status, survived the tide of British conquest in India. They covered an area of nearly 716,000 square miles and claimed the allegiance of more than ninety-three million people. At one end of the scale, there were states like Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, Gwalior and Kashmir, described as the Big Five, which were as large and populous as some of the European countries. At the other end, there were units which were scarcely bigger than a fair-sized kitchen garden! Indeed, the process of India's sub-division was carried to such absurd extremes that no two official documents of any importance agreed on the actual number of states that figured on the country's political map. An adroit attempt was made to overcome the difficulty of separating the sheep from the goats by declaring that all territories in the Indian quadrilateral, excluding, of course, the enclaves of the French and the Portuguese, that did not comprise British India could be construed as the realms of the Maharajas and Nawabs.

Broadly speaking, there were, according to the Indian States' Committee, better known as the Butler Committee, 562 states which were classified into three categories, namely, states, whose rulers were members of the Chamber of Princes in their own right, 109; states, whose rulers were represented in the Chamber by twelve members of their order elected by themselves, 126; and estates and jagirs numbering 327. Kathiawar, in Gujarat, was the home of the principalities belonging to the last category.

No political disposition that permitted such a multitude of mutually exclusive and self-regarding units to flourish in a country which is basically the area of a single government and a single economy could claim to be rational. Decades ago, Sir William Lee-Warner, an authority on princely States, maintained that their continued existence in all their chaotic exuberance was a "signal instance" of British good-faith, but he himself asserted in another context that annexation had claimed the

magnitude of a "distinct policy" of the British Government. Surely, there is not much consistency between these two claims. The fact of the matter is that during the pre-Mutiny period the attitude of the East India Company towards the "country powers" was marked by a good deal of ambiguity and opportunism. It was only when the policy-makers became convinced that the princes of India, far from objecting to British paramountcy, actually rejoiced at their feudatory status that the attitude of the British Government towards them crystallised into a definite policy. The most striking feature of that policy was the complete integration of the states into the imperial system.

This historic process began with Wellesley, the boldest among the British conquerors and annexationists that ever came to this country. The famous subsidiary system, with which his name is associated, was not invented by him, but he transformed it into an effective instrument for reducing the princes to total impotence. He refused to recognise them as sovereign entities and his aggressive and overbearing attitude towards the Nawab Vazier of Oudh bore ample testimony to his attitude of contempt towards the rulers that had accepted British suzerainty. Trained and disciplined troops of the Company Government were permanently stationed at strategic points in the States which bore the entire cost of their maintenance by ceding large tracts of territory. Neither the ruler of a state nor his government had any manner of control over the subsidized force which was intended exclusively for the purpose of overawing him. In addition, he was not permitted to have any external relations, nor was he allowed to have any direct dealings even with a fellow-prince. Succession to the *gadi* (throne) had to be recognised by the paramount power if it was to become valid. Minority administrations were controlled from the Centre, which generally deputed European officers to head them so that whatever residual powers the State might have possessed and were coveted by the principal government could be taken away from it without much ado. The paramount power also asserted and enforced its right to intervene in the domestic concerns of the states if such a course of action was considered necessary either to curb "gross" misrule or to advance its imperial interests. The closer integration of the country, through railways and telecommunications, accentuated the artificiality of its division into the so-called "British

India" and "Indian India", which drove the Government to assert that its suzerainty over the states should remain undefined, that is to say, unlimited and unchecked. Wellesley's states' policy inevitably developed into an inexorable system that not only secured the subordination of the princes, but also gravely weakened their governing ability.

Many discerning contemporaries of Wellesley deplored the insidiousness of the system. His own brother, Arthur Wellesley, condemned it on the ground that it tended to bring about the internal decay of the protected state. It undermined the natural occupations and extinguished the spirit of the ruling, fighting and administrative classes. It also degraded and impoverished the people. Munro and Malcolm, those acute and impartial observers, also deplored the system because the security of the states could be purchased only by the "sacrifice of independence, of national character, and of whatever renders a people respectable".¹ A system that rendered a ruler independent of his own people was not only iniquitous but unique. Even Kautilya, the great apostle of absolute monarchy, did not countenance a polity in which the ruler could treat his subjects like blades of grass with impunity. His treatise insisted that a tyrant deserved deposition. Such a right is indeed inherent in every civilized system of government. "The Dutch Act of Abjuration," it has been rightly pointed out, "the English revolt against Stuart despotism, culminating in the Bill of Rights, and the American Declaration of Independence are episodes in the perennial struggle between the conception of authority by which law is merely what the prince wills, and the recognition of a law of which the highest in the land is but the minister."² By guaranteeing protection to its feudatories from internal rebellion and external attack, British paramountcy made it impossible for the ninety-three million people of the states to launch any such struggle for emancipating themselves from capricious and oppressive rule.

The consequences were as could be foreseen. With no incentive to govern well, an overwhelming majority of the princes sank into indolence and dissipation and squandered away the hard-earned resources of their subjects in frivolous and unworthy

¹ *India Under Wellesley*, P. E. Roberts, G. Bell, 1929, p. 37.

² *Holland*, J. A. Veraart, Macdonald, 1945, p. 35.

pursuits. Many observers, including some who were themselves responsible for enforcing the new system, felt constrained to characterise the princely governments as vicious and reckless which reduced the states into a "wilderness of oppression and misrule". Some of the rulers were certainly enlightened and able men, but the administration of most of them, according to a British Resident of considerable experience, were "bad, worse and hell". As far back as 1853, the London *Times* lamented: "We have emancipated these pale and ineffectual pageants of royalty from the ordinary fate that awaits an oriental despotism," but nothing was done to destroy these decrepit autocracies. Sir William Lee-Warner is only partly right when he says that "before the Mutiny, the record of their administration was darkened by the graver crimes of murder, cruelty and corruption", because this disease persisted as long as the states existed and ended only with their extinction. If annexation had been adopted as the only deterrent to misgovernment, there would certainly not have been five hundred odd princely millstones round India's neck when she became independent. Dalhousie, who annexed Oudh on the ground of misgovernment, shrank from adopting a similar course of action against Hyderabad, despite the fact that the state of affairs in the Nizam's dominions was "boiling up into very hot water". Such annexations as took place were largely, if not entirely, the outcome of the forward policy, enunciated in 1841, of "abandoning no just and honourable accession of territory and revenue". At no time did the plight of the states' people claim the serious attention of the paramount power.

The Sepoy Mutiny revolutionised the relations of the rulers with their suzerain. The devotion and enthusiasm with which they co-operated with the British in suppressing the rebellion was a welcome revelation to their political masters who generously requited them by proclaiming "once a state always a state". Annexation was abandoned as an unwise policy and the princes were encouraged to look upon it as little more than a bad dream. Cachar in 1832 and Coorg in 1834 were annexed to British India because of their oppressive governments, but no such remedy was available to the states' people in the post-Mutiny period. The reckless behaviour of the Gaekwar of Baroda in 1875 and the murder of Quinton, the Chief Commis-

sioner of Assam, in 1891, by the Jubraj of Manipur, would undoubtedly have led to the annexation of both these states in the pre-Mutiny era, but even the worst crimes of the princes, like Holkar's complicity in the murder of a millionaire in a busy and aristocratic locality of Bombay, merely ended in the sequestration of the guilty ruler's authority and not in the abolition of his state. The restoration of Mysore to the Wodiyar dynasty in 1881, fifty years after the assumption of its government by the Company Sarkar, furnished one more illustration of the inauguration of a new policy towards the princes.

Many significant steps were taken to draw them closer to the Imperial Government. The doctrine of lapse was abandoned and the princes were freely permitted to adopt heirs to their *gadis*. The Order of the Star of India was instituted in 1861 and was bestowed on many of the leading princes, although, as recipients of these favours, they themselves exposed the hollowness of their pretensions to independent sovereignty. The Nizam, in particular, became the most pampered autocrat, and, although his subordination to the paramount power was as absolute as that of any other prince, he was flattered by awarding him in January 1918 the title of "Exalted Highness"—an extra plumage to the caged bird to strut with. Titles, dignities, gun salutes and similar flummeries merely sharpened the jealousies among the princes, while their patrons lost nothing by being generous in their distribution. Professor Westlake has described the new relations between them thus: "There is good reason to believe that both by them and us a comradeship in difficulty and danger is indeed felt, such a comradeship as engages the strenuous and loyal exertions of a ship's crew under the categorical imperative of the captain".³

The importance of the princes thus lay entirely in their usefulness to the Empire. Curzon called them his colleagues and partners in sustaining the Raj. The need for such comradeship grew with the rising tempo of Indian nationalism. It was imperative for the Government to have as many allies as it could find to combat the new menace and who could be more ardent champions of the *status quo* than the princely autocrats? The reasons for Minto's generous attitude towards them have been

³ *Collected Papers on International Law*, Westlake, edited by Prof. Oppenheim, p. 632.

explained with admirable frankness by an unimpeachable authority. It says: "At almost the same moment the attitude of the Government of India began to change. The explanation lies less in any belated recognition of the Princes' rights than in the fact that the political movements within British India itself were beginning to dispute the right and authority by which India was governed. Assailed by the intelligentsia, the Government looked round naturally for allies and helpers. In 1857 the Princes had in general aided to resist the tide of the Mutiny. In 1907 they might aid to slacken the onslaught of political unrest. They were, therefore, to be cultivated rather than coerced. Seeing their rising value, the Princes raised their demands, but not too much, for they also were threatened by the same forces that the Government of India was seeking to dam back into constitutional channels. A new tendency had come into operation."⁴

But the inherent position of the princes as the subordinates of the British Government remained unchanged. Despite their elaborate pretensions, which will be discussed in the following pages, all that they enjoyed in their states was little more than delegated authority. No wind of change could modify the omnipotence of the British Resident or of the Agent to the Governor-General whose merest whisper echoed like thunder in the princes' palaces. There were certainly Residents who were kind, cordial and generally well-disposed towards the princes and their people. But the number of the overbearing type preponderated from the very commencement of the Company rule. In the pre-Mutiny period, Major Baillie of Oudh, Cole of Mysore, and Henry Russell of Hyderabad, to mention the names of only three Residents, became notorious for their intolerance and superciliousness. The position was not much different in our own time. Though by no means distinguished for their intellectual abilities, many of them were haughty, impertinent and ironical in their dealings with the rulers whom they often treated as their subordinates. They expected unquestioning obedience and even servile submission from these unfortunate men whose rank, honour and even security on the *gadi* depended upon their favour. In fact, the jewelled and titled fraternity was as much exposed to personal insults and humiliations as the rest of the

⁴ *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. VI, 1932, pp. 506-507.

population. The following incident is recorded by Sir Henry Cotton in his book *New India or India in Transition*: "In a recent *Times*' review of the *Leaves from the Diaries of a Soldier and Sportsman* by Sir Montagu Gerard, I read as follows: 'A petty Raja, going on a State visit to Agra, takes his seat in a first-class compartment, with a magnificent send-off by his loyal subjects. On his return he sneaks out of the third-class and explains to the expectant crowds that on the former occasion he had been boxed up with a couple of *sahibs*, muddied from snipe-shooting, who, had made him shampoo them all the way. The story of the Indian Rajah, who was called upon to unlace the boots and massage the weary legs of a British officer, is corroborated by Sir David Barr, the Resident at Hyderabad, and it would be incredible if it were not vouched for by such high authority'."

Nothing was incredible in unfree India. Madhavrao Sindhia of Gwalior, a front-rank ruler, an able and outstanding man, who would perhaps have made history had there been no *Pax Britannica* and upon whom the highest praise was bestowed by Curzon, was treated like a man of straw. Montagu, who records Sindhia's bitter complaint in his Diary, sagely concludes: "We live and learn."

The Maharaja of Bikaner, Sir Ganga Singh, was a shining light of the Princely Order, with, as Sir William Barton says, "a European reputation as a statesman of his country in the councils of the world". He was a signatory to the Treaty of Versailles, but none of these stood him in good stead in his relations with Captain S. F. Bayley, the Political Agent. The Himalayan pride of this man was deeply wounded when he was asked to take a shooting licence from the State Government. In a disdainful letter, addressed to the Maharaja, he wrote: "I will have it framed, I think, and show it to my cousin and others as a specimen of the advanced Government of Bikaner where not even the Political Agent may shoot without a licence."⁵

Cochin, in south India, was one of the most progressive states, whose rulers were noted for their wisdom and moderation. According to a document relating to this state, its ruler was commanded by Colonel Macaulay, the Resident, to this effect:

⁵ *The Future of Indian States*, V. B. Kulkarni, Thacker, 1944, p. 59.

"The Resident will be glad to learn that on his arrival near Cochin, the Raja will find it convenient to wait upon him." In the expansive days of British rule, India abounded in Grand Moghuls like these. Most of the princes, of course, deserved contempt for their imbecility and cowardly behaviour. Dalhousie wrote that the ruler of an important state was "eager to lick the dust below my feet".⁶ Another prince, "a man of enormous size, weighing something like twenty-four stone", went down on his knees and touched Curzon's feet with his head, the reason for his disgraceful behaviour being to win the Viceroy's favour.⁷ Lord Minto's younger son, Esmond, was addressed by the Maharaja of Nabha in these words, when the boy accompanied the Viceroy on his visit to the state in 1906: "Your father is kind to the Phulkian *misl* (confederation) because God, the Immortal, has caused the noble spirit of his ancestor, who saved their forefathers, to pass into him. You must never forget this, and must be kind to my grandchildren as your father is to me. My sword is yours."⁸ What a noble legacy to the Maharaja's progeny!

A mere letter from Minto caused transports of joy to the Begam of Bhopal, who celebrated the event by ordering her troops to parade with the precious document held at the saluting point. Twenty-one guns were fired in its honour! Morley, to whom the incident was reported, was mightily diverted. "Your story of the Begam of Bhopal," he wrote to Minto on December 27, 1906, "gave me as hearty a laugh as I have had for many a day. She must be a trump! I shall ask Haldane (Secretary of State for War) to plant a battery under my windows that I may commemorate any unusually satisfactory despatch you send me!"⁹ Sir Partap Singh, the Regent of Jodhpur, was an extraordinary man by any standard. Barton writes about him thus: "A keen soldier, a lover of horse and hound, the intimate friend of three British sovereigns, he was a type that appealed to the Englishman." The following passage about this veteran warrior from Lady Minto's book is revealing: "A relation of Sir Pertab's, a very good-looking boy, is

⁶ *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, edited by J. G. A. Baird, 1910, p. 103.

⁷ *Leaves from a Viceroy's Notebook*, Lord Curzon, Macmillan, 1926, p. 43.

⁸ *Lord Minto: A Memoir*, John Buchan, p. 246.

⁹ *India, Minto and Morley*, Lady Minto, p. 72.

staying here. Sir Pertab noticed that his manner was rather off-hand, and said to him: 'If you going Eton, although you being Prince, *you* staying downstairs blacking Sahibs' boots; this being good teaching for you'."¹⁰ After this, further illustrations of the princes' attitude towards their paramount lords are superfluous!

Such were the men who presided over the destiny of ninety-three million people. There were, of course, honourable exceptions, to which reference will be made later. But the generality of the princes were reckless, depraved and extravagant. The demands of the states' people on their rulers were extremely moderate. They asked that the ruler's Privy Purse should be fixed at a reasonable percentage to the total revenue of his state and that there should be a clear demarcation between personal and governmental expenditure. The tendency among most of the princes to appropriate between 20 and 50 per cent of their states' income for their personal enjoyment was condemned. Besides, they demanded that the administrations should rest on the rule of law, including certainty of law, its uniformity and approximation, wherever possible, with the better evolved laws of British India. Towards this end, it was urged that there should be a hierarchy of law courts, presided over by qualified and upright judges. There should also be an efficient police force to protect life and property and to impart a feeling of security to the people. There should be a more methodical and quicker despatch of official work which should be rescued from the capricious direction of the ruler by means of decentralisation. These were not revolutionary or utopian claims and yet they were, as Mahatma Gandhi observed, met with rifles.

Apart from the fact that a majority of the states being non-viable could not afford such an administration, it was not in the interests of the autocrats to have a settled and organised government since it constituted a restraint on their costly eccentricities. Volumes can be written on the subject of princely misbehaviour, but a few examples ought to suffice here. Feminine influence, wrote Barton, counted for much in the affairs of the States, and an intrigue in the ladies' quarters "may deflect policy and compass the ruin of some of the pillars of government". The same authority tells us that in one small state the inspector

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 409.

of dancing girls on £150 a year was given an extra £10 for acting as Chief Justice!¹¹ The Maharaja of an important state won distinction for eccentricity by uniting a pair of parrots in holy wedlock with great *eclat* and commemorating the event as a landmark in the history of his benighted rule.

The late Maharaja of Patiala, whose excesses were carefully documented and published in 1930, had a passion for the unusual and the fantastic. "This is the man," wrote Montagu, "who drives a Rolls Royce across country after black buck." The Maharaja's kennels were so wonderful that Barton went into raptures when he saw them. "He has ninety-five dogs," he wrote, "mostly gun dogs, many of them champions. They have wonderful quarters, specklessly clean, with tiled walls and electric light. Three Englishmen are in charge. They have a dog hospital with three wards and an operating theatre which would shame some of the military hospitals I have known in India. Some of the dogs cost over £300. One was bought from an Englishman for £200, and the Maharaja gave him another £50 because he wept when parting from it."¹² How generous of His Highness when his own people grovelled in poverty and groaned under his exactions and oppressions!

Junagadh furnishes a more recent example. The Nawab used to spend Rs. 16,000 a month on his dogs. Not to be outdone by the parrot-owning Maharaja, he lavishly celebrated the marriage of two of his canine pets, declaring the auspicious day a public holiday in his state!¹³

The Political Department, so powerful and so alert about its paramountcy rights, watched such princely excesses with unseeing eyes. The rulers might plunge their people into deeper penury by building more palaces, by pampering an unlimited number of pets, by going abroad frequently for no reason, and by lavishly entertaining visiting Viceroys and Governors, without the fear of any corrective weapon being used against them.

Maharaja Hari Singh's escapade in Europe as the notorious "Mr. A" cost £150,000 to the poverty-stricken people of Kashmir. The Jam Sahib of Nawanagar was the idol of the cricketing world, but Ranji's spending propensities hardly conduced to

¹¹ *The Princes of India*, Sir William Barton, Nisbet, 1934, p. 67.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35.

¹³ *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, V. P. Menon, Orient Longmans, 1956, pp. 125, 148.

the prosperity of his people. His foreign tours and his receptions to the visiting British dignitaries virtually impoverished the state.

The Nizam of Hyderabad, the modern Croesus, prefers to live like an indigent nobleman, but his Civil List was of massive proportions. It amounted to £1,000 a day, besides the income from various other sources. The dominion of the world's richest man also contained people who were perhaps among the world's poorest.

Lord Irwin, later Lord Halifax, was known in India as the "Christian Viceroy". He wrote about the ruler of Dholpur thus: "The Maharana was a great lover of his animals, and we often used to laugh at him for giving the tigers in a special area near his jungle palace bowls of chilled milk and frozen cheeses in the hot weather."¹⁴ Probably, it never occurred to the Viceroy to remonstrate with His Highness for such criminal expenditure of his people's money.

There were, of course, enlightened princes who embraced every opportunity to advance the well-being of their people. The late Maharaja of Mysore was pre-eminent among them. The Rendition Treaty of 1881 greatly helped the rulers and their Dewans to modernise the state and to provide it with an enlightened administration. Mysore was rightly regarded as a model state among its compeers. Travancore and Cochin in the extreme south were equally famous for their benevolent government and claimed the highest percentage of literacy in the country. The Maharaja of Gondal, a medium-sized state in Gujarat, and the Chief of Aundh, a small principality in the former Bombay Presidency, won countrywide attention for their patriotism and progressive administration.

Sayajirao Gaekwar of Baroda was another remarkable ruler who infused his own enlightened outlook and dynamism into the administration of a state that had long suffered from gross misrule and oppression. Ascending the *gadi* in 1881, the Maharaja forestalled many of the British Indian reforms by introducing them first in his own state. Primary education was made free and compulsory; infant marriage was interdicted; and the odious practice of untouchability was abolished. Though born

¹⁴ *Fullness of Days*, Earl of Halifax, Collins, 1957, p. 142.

of humble parentage, the Maharaja never lost his sense of realism by his elevation.

He strongly resented his feudatory status and secretly desired the total destruction of the princely states. "The first thing," he told the late Aga Khan, "you'll have to do when the English are gone, is to get rid of all these rubbishy States. I tell you, there'll never be an Indian nation until this so-called Princely Order disappears. Its disappearance will be the best thing that can happen to India—the best possible thing."¹⁵

Madhavrao Sindhia, to whom reference has already been made, was equally bitter about the British rule but was extremely careful in his dealings with Delhi. Like Sayajirao, he nursed a deep yearning for national freedom and told Dr. M. R. Jayakar that he would give every help in preserving the integrity of the country after independence.¹⁶

With the exception of such mettlesome Maharajas, the majority of princes hankered after more privileges and immunities in total disregard of their real position. The Nizam, who ought to have known better, received a memorable snub from Lord Reading, the Viceroy (1921-26), for raising the issue of his alleged independent status in connection with the Berar question. Reading's reply of March 27, 1926, was crushing. It read: "The sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India and therefore no ruler of an Indian state can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing." This categorical assertion of British supremacy ought to have silenced the princes then and for ever, but they continued to cherish the illusion that the yoke of paramountcy would be lifted from their shoulders if they agitated for it. They hoped to use the growth of nationalism in India as a trump card in their favour. In response to their request to the new Viceroy, Lord Irwin (1926-31), a Committee of three, with Sir Harcourt Butler as President, was appointed in December 1927 by the Secretary of State, Lord Birkenhead, to present a report on the relations between them and the British Government.

The princes engaged the services of Sir Leslie Scott and many other British legal luminaries who, after collecting a staggering fee, presented before the Butler Committee their clients' case

¹⁵ *The Memoirs of Aga Khan*, Simon & Schuster, 1954, pp. 301, 302.

¹⁶ *The Story of My Life*, Dr. M. R. Jayakar, Vol. I, Asia Publishing House, 1958-59, p. 382.

which read stranger than fiction. The Joint Opinion was the quintessence of their point of view and it was profusely supplemented with Scott's ingenious but thoroughly untenable arguments. The Counsel for the princes maintained that in examining the relationship between the Indian states and the Crown of England as the paramount power, only legal criteria should be adopted and that the scope of British paramountcy over them should be assessed strictly on the basis of contractual obligations. The states were originally independent sovereign entities and had held that status while entering into political relations with the British Government. International law ceased to take cognisance of their existence only after they had accepted British suzerainty and not before. The rights and obligations of the paramount power in relation to the states were strictly limited and rested on agreement, express or implied. Elaborating this contention, the Joint Opinion said: "The gist of the agreement constituting paramountcy is, we think, that the state transfers to the Crown the whole conduct of its foreign relations—every other state being foreign for this purpose—and the whole responsibility of defence; the consideration for this cession of sovereignty is an undertaking by the Crown to protect the state and its ruler against all enemies and dangers external and internal, and to support the ruler and his lawful successors on the throne."

The liability of the paramount power was thus limited so that all the sovereign rights, privileges and dignities that had not been expressly transferred to it still remained with the states. In other words, the residuary jurisdiction rested entirely with them. The Counsel did not, however, consider it odd when it affirmed that it was part of the paramount power's duty to intervene in the domestic concerns of a state in the event of gross misgovernment, especially when Scott asserted in the course of his arguments that "the rights of the states are to govern themselves and, up to a point, to misgovern themselves if they choose".

The doctrine of limited liability inevitably led the Counsel to repudiate the validity of usage and sufferance which were dismissed as sterile. Neither of them could confer new rights on the British Government unless those rights had been acquiesced in by the states. So, according to no criterion could

paramountcy be construed as an "unlimited reservoir of discretionary authority". In fact, paramountcy was "merely a name for a certain set of rights when vested by consent in another sovereign state". Lastly, the relations of the states were with the British Crown and with none else. It, therefore, followed that the Crown could not require them to transfer their loyalty to any "third party".

The whole thesis was so opposed to commonsense and to historical facts that its demolition did not at all require much effort. The number of states that flourished under British dominion was more than five hundred and nothing could be more fantastic than to suggest that all or even many of them enjoyed what was called pre-existing sovereignty. In fact, there was no principality worth the name that had not been a feudatory of either the Moghuls, the Marathas or the Sikhs. It was equally absurd to claim any sanctity for the treaties. There were only forty of them as against hundreds of states and even they betrayed much variation since they were concluded during different periods of British expansion. The relations with the rest were governed by engagements, while there were a few principalities, like Pudukottai in the south, which entered into no written agreement at all with the British. It required considerable courage on the part of the princes to invoke the terms of a few obsolete documents in order to bolster up their case when they knew that they were rendered nugatory even before the ink on them had dried.

The Butler Committee's findings, which negatived their contention, were anticipated as far back as 1911 by Lieutenant-Colonel Kemball, Resident at Gwalior, who, in his letter of that year, declared that it was not open to the state to "put forward new claims based on a literal interpretation of treaties, many of the provisions of which are obsolete or have to be construed with reference to conditions which have subsequently arisen".¹⁷ The engagements were equally worthless. For instance, the *Fael Zamins*, executed by the Chiefs of Kathiawar, clearly indicate that they were treated as criminals and bandits. These documents read in parts thus: "I will not harbour thieves in my limits, but if I keep any in my country it shall be under proper

¹⁷ *Indian States Committee, Minutes of Proceedings*, 1928, p. 93.

precautions. I will not plunder in the *taluka* of any other chief or on the high road ”.

Thus, without usage and sufferance, the original treaties and compacts would never have been adequate instruments for regulating the relations between the two. Prof. Keith, who dismissed the arguments of the princes' counsel as betraying “singularly little sense of constitutional law”, was equally forthright in rejecting the thesis about the immutability of the treaties. “The rulers,” he wrote, “had accepted the invasions of their technical rights and to repudiate the means by which they had been able to live was inadmissible.”¹⁸ The Butler Committee was no less emphatic in upholding the validity of usage and sufferance. “We cannot agree,” it declared, “that usage in itself is in any way sterile. Usage has shaped and developed the relationship between the Paramount Power and the States from the earliest times, almost in some cases, as already stated, from the date of the treaties themselves.” It further said: “Usage springs up naturally to supply what is wanting in the terms of treaties that have grown old. Usage, in fact, lights up the dark places of the treaties.”¹⁹

In other words, the convenience of the British Government was the only decisive factor in regulating its relations with the states. The actual position of a ruler was stated by Keith in words which it is impossible to challenge: “The prince,” he wrote, “was granted possession and administration, not sovereignty, and his possession was made conditional on his remaining faithful in allegiance and subordination to the Crown.” Though stated differently, the Butler Committee's views were exactly the same. It refused to recommend any relaxation of the British Government's hold on them on the ground that “imperial necessity and new conditions may at any time raise unexpected situations”. It, therefore, declared with absolute finality that British paramountcy over them must always remain paramount. The Committee reminded the clamant princes that it was through paramountcy alone that the danger to their continued existence had been pushed aside.

¹⁸ *A Constitutional History of India*, A. B. Keith, Methuen, 1936, pp 292, 293.

¹⁹ *Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29*, paras 40, 52.

The Committee had, however, no hesitation in endorsing the princes' plea that their relations were with the Crown of England and not with the Government of India. It did not serve the Committee's purpose to ask what *locus standi* that distant authority could possibly have in the states if the rest of the country had also not been within its jurisdiction. Nothing could have been more preposterous than the contention that the British Crown's rights of paramountcy in the territories of its feudatories would have remained unaffected even when the rest of India came under her own people's government.

In fact, the whole doctrine of direct relationship was an adroit invention in order to use the states as one more counterpoise to the Indian demand for national independence. Both the arguments of Scott and the Butler Committee's declarations make this fact abundantly clear. We read from the proceedings of the Committee thus: "It is no use anybody in British India demanding a Dominion status inconsistent with the retention by the Crown of this country (England) of complete control over the armed forces of India, because it would mean this country breaking its sacred word to all these Belgiums (states) in India". The Committee was not assailed by any doubts either about the morality or the reasonableness of this astounding statement and recorded its own "strong opinion" that the existing relationship between the princes and the paramount power "should not be transferred without their own agreement to a relationship with a new government in British India responsible to an Indian legislature". It was as though all the mighty labour that had gone into the production of its Report was intended for the sole purpose of making a gift of one more veto to the British Government against the Indian demand for freedom. The plea of the states' people to be heard was summarily rejected by the Committee since it had become an axiom of British policy to treat the princes as states.

These findings of the Committee, which were a travesty of every consideration of justice and equity, led to strange developments. Secure in the knowledge that their protectors meant to remain in India for ever, the princes became more and more irresponsible, adopting unbridled repression as the only reply to their people's modest demand for the association of their representatives with the government of the states. Nor did the

attitude of their advisors help to improve matters. Sir Kailas Narayan Haksar, one of their most trusted counsellors, dismissed the popular movement in the states as "spurious unrest" and advocated the vague doctrine of gradualness for dealing with the situation. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, the brilliant and versatile Dewan of Travancore, surprised all right-thinking persons by declaring in the State Assembly that legally it was not possible "without the active concurrence of the British Government for the Ruler to divest himself of his undivided authority and jurisdiction over the governance of his State in favour of any other authority". The learned Dewan did not explain whether the participation of the state's own people in its administration really amounted to the transfer of power to some other "authority".

Complicated constitutional issues were needlessly raised on the simple demand for the abolition of caprice and autocracy as the basis of governance in the states. Earl Winterton, Under-Secretary of State, declared twice in 1938 that the paramount power would not "obstruct proposals for constitutional advance initiated by the rulers". He reiterated this view in April of the following year, but added that "no state would be regarded as relieved of its obligations to the paramount power by the fact that the ruler divested himself of the control necessary to discharge them". The subject was largely academic and, while the constitutional pundits were still engaged in debating its implications, the Second World War came, pushing all the vital problems of peace and progress into the background. The war gave the princes a welcome opportunity to make an enthusiastic demonstration of their devotion and loyalty to the Raj and to suppress the wants and wishes of their people with extreme severity. But their days were numbered.

The War also gave great relief to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow (1936-43), who had been ceaselessly endeavouring to bring the states into an all-India federation. India has few regrets that his attempts failed. The whole basis of the federal scheme was to frustrate the establishment of genuinely democratic institutions in the country. This was made abundantly clear during the many years when the Act of 1935 was being hammered into shape. The association of the states with the provinces in the government of the Centre without modifying the autocracy of

the princes was clearly intended to strengthen the conservative elements in the country. This point became clear in the evidence tendered before the Joint Select Committee which was told that the princes were being brought in "to make the Centre conservative and pro-British". In November 1934, Sir Samuel Hoare appealed to them to join the Federation without hesitation since they would find that their "claims, their rightful claims, have been met in the letter and in the spirit". Indeed, the statute bristled with so many safeguards that there was no reason for any champion of the *status quo* to feel hesitant about welcoming it. "If they analyse those proposals," declared the Secretary of State, "I think, they will agree with me that it will be almost impossible short of a landslide, for the extremists to get control of the Federal Centre."²⁰ The "extremists" were, of course, the nationalists.

Linlithgow, who, by presiding over the deliberations of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 1933-34, had intimate knowledge of the real scope of the Act of 1935, was equally anxious that it should be brought into force without much loss of time. Such a step, besides ensuring the retention of real power in British hands, would liberate the policy-makers from the bother of making fresh constitutional proposals at least for some years. But, to his great surprise and disappointment, the princes, the accession of a certain number of whose states was a pre-condition to an all-India federation becoming a *fait accompli*, stubbornly refused to walk into his parlour, even though it had been made perfectly safe for the habitation of all reactionary elements in the country. He sent in vain Sir Courtenay Latimer, Sir Francis Wylie and Sir Arthur Lothian, all of the Political Service, as his emissaries to the states in the hope of converting the princes to his way of thinking. Led by men like Sir Akbar Hydari, the princes' advisors, however, succeeded in persuading them to remain adamant.

Both they and their counsellors knew that the entry of the states into an all-India polity would inevitably lead to a thorough exposure of the autocracy that flourished in them and would thus vastly strengthen the popular movement for its destruction. No amount of statutory concessions and guarantees could, there-

²⁰ *Speeches by the Rt. Hon. Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, 1931-35*, p. 51.

fore, allay their fears. Addressing the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes on August 21, 1939, the Crown Representative assured the princes that the federal scheme guaranteed their "full and future security". In fact, it had been so devised as to ensure a "substantial voice" for them in the Federation. The states would have 125 seats, or one-third, in the Lower House, and 104 seats, or two-fifths, in the Upper House. "This has always seemed to me," Linlithgow said, "to be a block which, if the Princely Order are wise, and hold together, no political party can possibly afford to ignore."²¹ Many imperial handymen were profoundly distressed at the princes' "suicidal obstinacy" and at Linlithgow's excessive regard for their susceptibilities. They watched with sorrow the elaborately-contrived plan of all-India federation returning to the clouds. Finding a secure asylum in its heavenly abode, the federal scheme never returned to the earth, because free India was prepared for the only solution to the states' problem, namely, their dissolution.

²¹ *Speeches and Statements of the Marquess of Linlithgow* (1936-43), Government of India, 1945, pp. 196-97.

9. THE COMMUNAL TRIANGLE

AFTER the great rebellion of 1857, Indian politics drifted imperceptibly towards a crisis which could be overcome only by partitioning the country. Such an outcome was unfortunate since the differences between the Hindus and Muslims, the principal Indian communities, were neither fundamental nor irreconcilable. It is true, as we saw in an earlier chapter, that Muslim rule was not accepted as a natural dispensation by a large section of the population and was eventually brought to an end by the formidable opposition organised against it by the Marathas, the Rajputs, the Sikhs and other martial classes. But the war was not waged against the Muslims as a community, but against those tyrants and bigots who sought to establish a theocratic State in the country and thus permanently impose the government of a religious minority over its people. No hatred or animosity vitiated the relations between the two communities to justify their separation for ever. Hindu brains and valour were freely harnessed by Muslim monarchs to the government of their realms, while Hindu rulers were no less enthusiastic in entertaining the services of their Muslim subjects. The armed forces of the Vijayanagar and the Maratha empires, like those of the Muslim Powers, were composite in character and consisted of a good number of Muslims. Some of the most trusted counsellors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the founder of the Sikh kingdom, belonged to that faith.

It was in the fitness of things that such mutual confidence and inter-dependence existed between the two communities. The Muslims of the Indian sub-continent are not aliens in the sense that the Europeans that came to the country were. In fact, an overwhelming majority of them are derived from the Hindu stock so that in their racial composition, in their language and literature, in their manners and customs, and in their atti-

tude to life, they differ but little from the rest of the population. The mere fact that their religious beliefs and modes of worship are different cannot transform them into a distinct nation. The influence exerted upon them and their way of life by the ancient civilization of the land is so powerful and all-pervasive that, except in the matter of religion, there is little in common between the Muslims of the Indian peninsula and their foreign co-religionists. With a frankness that may not be relished by the champions of the "two-nation" theory, a writer says: "A large proportion of the Muhammadans of India hardly deserve that name."¹

The social and cultural integration of the two communities is a historical process that has advanced unhampered by the political vicissitudes that have overtaken the country from time to time. The best minds among them have always found in the religion, the philosophy and the literature of the other many elements worthy of acceptance and assimilation. Alberuni, rightly acclaimed as the Master, who accompanied Mahmud of Ghazni to India in the eleventh century, saw in Sanskrit literature an abounding source of wisdom and mastered the difficult language so that he could gain a vivid and first-hand knowledge of the ancient lore of the land. His *Tahkik-i-Hind* or "An Enquiry into India" is a "marvel of well-digested erudition". How profound and far-reaching the influence of Vedanta and Buddhism was on the pantheistic developments in the later Sufi schools is a subject that still awaits a comprehensive treatment by scholars. There were many Muslim men of learning who followed in the footsteps of Alberuni. For instance, the great Sanskrit revival in Bengal in the seventeenth century was heralded by a Muslim writer, Syed Alaol, whose proficiency in the classical language was so outstanding that the like of it was rarely found in the Bengali literature. E. B. Havell, who brings this fact to our notice, observes: "The common religious sentiment and ties of nationality which brought the two creeds together manifested their influence in many ways. Many a

¹ *India: Its Administration and Progress*, Sir John Strachey, Macmillan, 1911, pp. 334-35. Also the views of Salahuddin Khodabakhsh, Professor of Law and Islamic History, Calcutta University, quoted by Dr. Rajendra Prasad in *India Divided*, Hind Kitabs, 1946, p. 50.

Mahomedan offered *Puja* at Hindu temples, as the Hindus offered *Sinni* at Mahomedan mosques.”²

The same authority draws attention to the fact that the influence of Hindu architecture on Muslim monuments in India was decisive. He writes: “The Jami Masjid and other mosques of Ahmedabad are, as Fergusson says, ‘Hindu or Jain in every detail’, only here and there an arch is inserted, not because it is ‘wanted constructively, but because it was a symbol of the faith’.” Havell further says: “It is the Indian art, not Arab, Persian, or European, that we must study to find whence came the inspiration of the Taj Mahal and the great monuments of Bijapur. They are more Indian than St. Paul’s Cathedral and the Westminster Abbey are English.”³ Again, the Hindus were the chief contributors to the new Urdu language which became the *lingua franca* of the educated classes in North India. In fact, as Sir George Grierson has observed, “the extreme Persiani- zation of Urdu is due to Hindu rather than to Mussalman influence”.⁴

With so much in common between them, the Hindus and Muslims would perhaps have created a common political platform and striven unitedly for national freedom from British rule if the Muslims had taken kindly to Western influence and Western education as the Hindu intelligentsia did. The vital step taken by the British Indian Government in March 1835 by making English the official language of the country was in consonance with the East India Company’s long-standing policy of spreading Western education among the Indian people. It is a remarkable fact that, although the sovereignty of India was wrested from them by the British, the Hindus showed no hostility to the English schools which, as Lord Hastings observed, were demanded in increasing numbers. The liberal traditions established by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Tagore family and

² *Indian Architecture*, E. B. Havell, John Murray, 1913, p. 118. In a conversation with an official from Karnal in the Punjab, Sir Malcolm Darling learnt that fifteen years before Muslims from some fifty villages in his district were willing to return to the fold of their Hindu clansmen if they could be readily accepted. The offer was declined. “In this area,” Darling wrote, “where Hindu and Muslim belong to different clans, they still inter-change civilities at marriage, inviting Mullah or Brahmin, as the case may be, to share in the feasting.” (*At Freedom’s Door*, Oxford, 1949, p. 109.)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴ *Modern India & the West*, edited by L. S. S. O’Malley, Oxford, 1941, p. 9.

many others in Bengal and by Ranade and Telang in Maharashtra, for example, bore further testimony to the time-honoured truth that learning and knowledge know no racial or national frontiers. The lead acquired by the Hindus in education and the ready access gained by them to the public services produced the most unexpected and fateful consequences to the political future of the country.

In spite of Prophet Mohamed's injunction to the faithful to "go even to the walls of China for the sake of learning", the Muslims of India turned their back on Western education. The abolition of Persian as the language of the law courts in 1857 was regarded by them as a death-blow to their well-being and progress. "For the orthodox Muslim," writes Sir Philip Hartog, "education, religion, and Arabic, the sacred language of the Koran, were inseparable. In general, a school where he could not learn Koran was not school for him."⁵ We learn from Maulana Azad, a great Muslim divine, President of the Indian National Congress, and free India's first Education Minister, that his own father had no faith in the Western system. Such an attitude on the part of the Muslim community was hardly conducive to its adjustment to the new situation created by the British administration in the country. Thus, by the time Sir Syed Ahmed Khan started his great campaign for the spread of Western enlightenment among his co-religionists, there were only 26 Muslim graduates as against 1,652 from the Hindu community. The number of "English-educated" men among the two communities in 1893 was: Muslims 546; Hindus 4,987.⁶

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), the doyen of Muslim nationalism, was a man of noble presence and had acquired all the elaborate manners of the defunct Moghul court. Like most of his contemporaries, he was a firm believer in the indispensability of the British Raj to India and stood by it steadfastly as much in the hour of its trial as in the hour of its triumph. But he was fearless in exposing its shortcomings and attacked it for its unwarranted vendetta against his co-religionists. He had a sincere admiration for the Bengalis whose intellectual brilliance and progressive outlook deeply appealed to him. He

⁵ *Some Aspects of Indian Education: Past and Present*, Sir Philip Hartog, Oxford, 1939, p. 50.

⁶ *Muslim India*, Mohammad Noman, Kitabistan, 1942, pp. 43, 44, 54.

conceived lofty ideals of nationalism and declared: "In the word Nation, I include both Hindus and Muhammadans because that is the only meaning I can attach to it." He went a step further when he said: "I call both these races which inhabit India by one word, i.e. *Hindus*, meaning to say that they are the inhabitants of Hindustan."⁷

Ahmed Khan did not know a word of English, but, like a man of vision, he realised the immense value of Western science and Western learning for the uplift of a stagnant community. He, therefore, boldly set out to westernize Indian Islam by establishing a college at Aligarh in 1875 where modern scientific studies were combined with religious education. The institution, which developed into the famous Aligarh University in 1920, was, by a curious twist of fortune, destined to play an outstanding role in fostering a sense of exclusive nationalism among the Muslim intelligentsia.

Ahmed Khan's repudiation of the paramountcy of the Ottoman Khalif and his plea for a rationalist interpretation of the Koran on the lines of the old Mu'tazila school, was vehemently opposed by the orthodox priests who reacted, with ill-concealed dismay and indignation, to his assertion that the proof of the truth of Islam was its "conformity to nature". His new movement was given the name of *nechari* and was angrily attacked by Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, the founder of the nineteenth century pan-Islamic movement. Writing from Cairo in his violent treatise *The Refutation of the Materialists*, Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani declared: "Nechariya is the root of corruption, the source of uncountable evils and the ruin of the country. The *necharis* present themselves before the eyes of fools as the standard-bearers of science, but only give a wider range to treachery."⁸ But such fulminations against his movement did not deflect Ahmed Khan from his chosen path.

By a strange freak of fortune, this fearless fighter for progress and rationalism, however, suddenly reversed all his deeply-felt political convictions and openly allied himself with the champions of the *status quo*. In a speech delivered at Lucknow on

⁷ *The Communal Triangle*, Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan, Kitabistan, 1942, p. 23.

⁸ *Modern Trends in Islam*, Prof. H. A. R. Gibb, The University of Chicago Press, 1945, p. 58.

December 28, 1887, before an audience that "represented the intellect, and the aristocracy, the brain and the muscle of the Mahomedan community", he made an intemperate attack on the two-year old Indian National Congress, on his exemplars, the Bengalis, and on everything that would have helped the country's political progress. He opposed competitive examinations on the ground that India did not consist of one nation!

The Lucknow speech was most fruitful to Ahmed Khan who was "honoured and created a Knight Commander of the most exalted order of the Star of India three days after the speech".⁹ A. O. Hume, founder of the Congress, believed that the *volte face* of the Muslim leader was instigated by the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, and was deeply offended by the Khan's outburst. Writing on January 22, 1888, he said: "Doubtless, though it may be hard to realise it,—just as mosquitoes and cockroaches perform a useful part in the universal workshop, so men like Syed Ahmed and creatures like the *Muslim Herald*, perform useful parts in the evolution of the nation, so I never for two minutes bear any of these people any personal ill-will."¹⁰

Hostility to Hindu-Muslim collaboration in furtherance of their modest political aspirations was, however, not limited to the Viceroy and other imperial handymen. The British principals of Ahmed Khan's Muslim College comported themselves like active politicians and strove hard to disrupt the unity between the two communities. The first principal, Sir Theodore Beck, gained considerable ascendancy over the mind of the ageing Muslim leader who allowed himself to be indoctrinated with reactionary political ideas. Beck engineered a mighty protest by Muslims against Charles Bradlaugh's Bill of 1889 which was intended to introduce democratic institutions in the country. "It is imperative," wrote Beck, the educationist, "for the Muslims and the British to unite with a view to fighting these agitators and prevent the introduction of democratic form of government unsuited as it is to the needs and genius of the country. We, therefore, advocate loyalty to the Government and Anglo-Muslim collaboration." An institutional basis was given to such "collaboration" in December 1893, with the formation of the

⁹ *Badraddin Tyabji: A Biography*, Hussain B Tyabji, Thacker, 1952, p. 198.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p 200.

Anglo-Mohammadan Defence Association, the aims and objects of which were to prevent the country's principal communities from coming together in order to agitate for national self-determination. Ahmed Khan, now in his seventy-seventh year, was too busy to give much attention to the new organisation. That task devolved on Beck who, as the Secretary of the Association, became its life and soul.¹¹

The Aligarh school, founded with the noble object of popularising modern science and knowledge among the Muslims of India, thus became the centre and citadel of separatism and exclusiveness. As the first Indian institution in the great Islamic consensus to attempt a closer understanding between the Eastern and Western cultures, much that is progressive and constructive was expected from it. The Hindus and Muslims were condemned to common subjection under British rule. Western thought and literature and Western institutions had taught the educated among them the feasibility and the desirability of establishing a democratic form of government in the country and running it as a common enterprise by the representatives of the people. However glorious her past, India could never have conceived of such a system so long as she remained ignorant of the vote and the ballot-box.

Apprenticeship to British rule thus gave the Indian people an inestimable opportunity to build up a new India, deriving her strength and sanctions from the democratic and secular character of her government. But no such vision illumined the thoughts and activities of Aligarh which disastrously failed to contribute to the integration of Muslims as full-pledged citizens of a united India. Its role in the country's life has been admirably summed up by no less a person than the Aga Khan who played a leading part in shaping its fortunes. His Highness wrote: "We may claim with pride that Aligarh was the product of our own efforts and of no outside benevolence; and surely it may also be claimed that the independent, sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh."¹² Aligarh, whose role in the pre-independence era was thus plainly negative, continues to thrive in free India. All right-thinking people should wish it

¹¹ *Makers of Pakistan and Modern Muslim India*, A. H. Albiruni, Muhammad Ashraf, 1950, p. 46.

¹² *The Memoirs of Aga Khan*, Simon and Schuster, 1954, p. 36

godspeed in the hope that under the new dispensation it will endeavour to fulfil, though belatedly, the ideals for which it was brought into existence.

The indoctrination of young Muslim students with separatist ideals and the segregation of the bulk of the community from the main stream of the national life through communal electorates, created a new class of educated and city-bred Muslims, a majority of whom gained the conviction that the best interests of themselves and of their community as a whole lay in acquiescing in the British rule without doubt or demur. Living in a world of their own, they were seldom disturbed by the thought that, in the absence of any action on the part of her children, India might well remain chained to the *status quo* as a British dependency till the end of time. It would, of course, be historically untrue to suggest that no section of the Muslim community made any contribution to Indian nationalism. The community abounded in patriots who, along with the rest of their countrymen, made supreme sacrifices in the cause of their motherland, but it is impossible to repudiate the fact that, as a vital segment of the population, its struggle for national liberation ought to have been more impressive. Maulana Azad records that foreign Muslims felt that their co-religionists in India ought to have taken the lead in that direction instead of becoming the "camp-followers of the British".¹³ Not all the Hindus and other non-Muslims were patriots, but in their case, English education, far from making them apathetic and hostile to the country's political aspirations, stimulated in them a lively interest in its future. This fundamental divergence between the Muslims and the rest of the population in their approach to common problems made any concerted action on political issues extremely difficult.

Perhaps, the Hindu-Muslim differences would not have developed into a crisis if Britain's response to the Indian demand for constitutional reforms had been helpful. With no intention to concede India's right to self-determination, the policy-makers found in the communal situation a welcome pretext for pursuing their policy of negativism to its illogical conclusion. As we saw in an earlier chapter, Lord Curzon's object in partitioning

¹³ *India Wins Freedom*, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Orient Longmans, 1959, p. 7.

Bengal was not entirely administrative convenience. This man, who like many others of his ilk, believed that it was the birth-right of Britain to ride on the back of mankind, was convinced that it was the height of unwisdom to allow the minds and thoughts of Indians to be influenced by liberal Western ideas about liberty and freedom. Such imprudence, he wrote, had resulted in "consolidating the ruled and feeding their minds on a Western diet". The plan for the partition of Bengal was, therefore, intended to weaken resurgent Indian nationalism, especially in that province where it was particularly strong. "The object of the measure," wrote Sir Henry Cotton, "was to shatter the unity and to disintegrate the feelings of solidarity which are established in the province." In fact, it was openly declared by the authorities that the aim of the reorganisation was to transform East Bengal and Assam into a "Mohemadan province" and to recognise credal distinctions as the basis of the new official policy.¹⁴ As pointed out in an earlier chapter, the frank, if indiscreet, observations of Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the first Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal, made it abundantly clear that the policy of pitting one Indian community against another had now become an indispensable feature of the administration. Fuller proclaimed that of his two wives, Hindu and Muslim, the latter was his favourite! Such open avowal of official partiality encouraged the Muslims to believe that "the British authorities were ready to forgive them all excesses".¹⁵

The doctrine of divide and rule became for the first time a cardinal principle of State policy during the viceroyalty of Lord Minto, an old Tory patrician, who, in close collaboration with Lord Morley, the great champion of Liberalism, incorporated representation by religion in the new Councils created under the Morley-Minto reforms. The reforms, as we saw earlier, did not take India a single step towards national independence, but they have won a notable place in history as a divisive force that gave a powerful impulse to the separatist tendencies in the country. When the question of introducing changes in the administration was under consideration, a deputation, consisting

¹⁴ *A Nation in Making*, Sir Surendranath Banerjea, Oxford, 1925, pp. 187-88.

¹⁵ *Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development*, Gurmukh Nihal Singh, India Book Shop, 1933, p. 319.

of some of the shining lights of the Muslim community and headed by the Aga Khan, waited on the Viceroy, Lord Minto, on October 1, 1906, in order to secure preferential treatment for their co-religionists. The petitioners prayed that representative institutions should not be introduced in India since they were so alien to her people and that, should the government in its unwisdom decide to import this exotic plant, the Muslims for their part would prefer their interests to be safeguarded through representation by separate electorates. Such representation should be "commensurate not merely with their numerical strength, but also with their political importance and the value of the contribution which they made to the defence of the Empire".

The untenability of the deputationists' claim and of the arguments urged in its support was conveniently ignored by the Viceroy who heartily welcomed the opportunity of driving a permanent wedge between the two communities. The Muslims were not, as they are not in free India, an unimportant minority, and yet the deputationists prayed that their value should be assessed in terms of their willingness and capacity to side with the Raj. Minto was, therefore, pleased not only to entertain their pretensions but also to applaud them. L. S. Amery, who, as Secretary of State during some of the crucial years of the last war, played a notable part in shaping India's future, told an audience at the English-Speaking Union in November 1940 that the Muslims received the right of separate representation from "a profoundly reluctant Secretary of State", that is, Morley. Amery was his own authority for this statement.

How "reluctant" the authorities were to countenance the unfair demands of the deputationists is borne out by Minto's reply. He said: "The pith of your address, as I understand it, is a claim that, in any system of representation, whether it affects a municipality, a district board, or a legislative council, in which it is proposed to introduce or to increase the electoral organisation, the Mohammedan community should be represented as a body. You justly claim that your position should be estimated not merely on your numerical strength but in respect to the political importance of your community and the service that it has rendered to the Empire." Besides calling attention to the

fact that the concessions demanded by the memorialists were in the nature of a *quid pro quo* for their community's loyalty to the Raj, Minto declared with complete certitude that "any electoral representation in India would be doomed to mischievous failure which aimed at granting a personal enfranchisement regardless of the beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population of this continent".¹⁶ It is evident from this passage that the Viceroy was not only not unwilling to concede the Muslim demand, but was in fact anxious to interdict the system of personal enfranchisement even before it was introduced and tried.

The October deputation, the plea of its members and Minto's reply were acclaimed as a memorable event. Lady Minto wrote: "This has been a very eventful day: as someone said to me, 'an epoch in Indian history'." ¹⁷ Writing to her, an anonymous but important person declared ecstatically that the episode was "nothing less than the pulling back of the sixty-two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition". The writer had evidently the Congress in his mind even though in his time that body was as disconcertingly loyal to the British connection as any other party. The Aga Khan, about whom we will hear a good deal in the following pages, was in a unique position to describe the true implications of the October "command performance". He wrote: "Lord Minto's acceptance of our demands was the foundation of all future constitutional proposals made for India by successive British Governments, and its final, inevitable consequence was the partition of India and the emergence of Pakistan."¹⁸

The spearhead of the separatist movement was the Muslim League which came into existence at Dacca on December 30, 1906. The Aga Khan became its first President and held that office till 1912. The goal of the organisation, as defined at its first session, was "to promote among Indian Moslems feelings of loyalty towards the British Government . . . to protect the political and other rights of the Indian Moslems and to place their needs and aspirations before the Government in temperate language". The League was certainly not a reactionary body

¹⁶ *Lord Minto: A Memoir*, John Buchan, Nelson, 1924, p. 244.

¹⁷ *India, Minto and Morley*, Lady Minto, Macmillan, 1934, p. 45.

¹⁸ *The Memoirs of Aga Khan*, p. 94.

throughout its career and claimed some of the greatest Muslim patriots in its ranks. In fact, its ideals at one time were so close to those of the Congress that it remained a distinct party only in name. It did not meet as a separate organisation between 1919 and 1924. And when it did meet in 1924 at Lahore, its President Jinnah, declared that there was a "universal demand" for immediate constitutional measures that would give India a "full-fledged Dominion responsible government". Similar sentiments were expressed from time to time on behalf of that body till 1938.

But, in spite of its eloquent plea for national freedom, the League never forswore its separatist demands, even though they were adjudged on the most impartial testimony to be inimical to the growth of harmonious relations between the two communities. Apart from making speeches and passing resolutions, its members, with a few exceptions, did not consider it necessary to descend to the arena of direct action in order to realise the country's goal. "The Muslim League," writes Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, a stalwart of the party, "was dominated by the titled gentry, Nawabs, landlords and *jee huzoors* who were generally well-meaning gentlemen, but wanted to serve the Muslim cause only so far as it did not affect their position either socially or in Government quarters." He adds: "After the break up of the Khilafat, a new set of Nawabs took up the guardianship of this auspicious child which offered them vast opportunities of acquiring honours and titles through their association with the institution."¹⁹

Whatever the composition of the League and however lukewarm its interest in the national affairs, the Congress persevered in cultivating its goodwill and co-operation in the hope of making a united demand for political reforms. Leaders like Gokhale and Tilak endorsed separate electorates for Muslims with the expectation that such concessions would promote a common platform between the two communities. The Lucknow Pact of 1916 may well be acclaimed as a memorable event, portraying the deep sincerity with which Indian nationalism sought to win over the minorities to the country's cause. The agreement between the Congress and the League endorsed the principle of

¹⁹ *Pathway to Pakistan*, Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, Longmans, 1961, p. 137.

separate electorates for the Muslims and extended them to the Punjab and the Central Provinces, where they had not existed till then. Seats were assigned to them on a scale far more generous than those conceded by the Morley-Minto Reforms. In Bengal and the Punjab, where they were entitled to only 10.7 per cent and 25 per cent of the seats in the provincial legislatures under the Act of 1909, their representation under the Lucknow Pact was raised to 40 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. In the other provinces, they were given many more seats than they had at the time or would have been entitled to on a population basis. In the United Provinces and Madras, for example, a 14 and 6.15 per cent Muslim population secured a representation of 30 per cent and 15 per cent. The community's representation at the Centre was similarly increased by providing that one-third of the Indian elected members to the Imperial Legislative Council should be Muslims, to be elected through communal voting. As a further safeguard to Muslim interests, it was laid down that no bill or resolution affecting a community should be proceeded with if three-fourths of the representatives of that community were opposed to it.

It is indeed impossible to think of a set of concessions more far-reaching or more generous than these. And yet the Pact, although it signalised, as Professor Coupland remarks, "a triumph for Indian nationalism", failed in its purpose, because neither communalism nor the British Government was happy about it. Edwin Montagu records a typical diehard Muslim reaction to the agreement. The Secretary of State was told by "a delightful old man, with a beautiful beard and a fine profile", that, although he had studied the Koran and all the commentaries, he could find no "sanction for the Congress-Moslem League scheme in them!"²⁰ The Montford Report draws attention to the fact that, despite these great concessions, representations were received by its authors from nearly all the Muslim associations for a further increase in the allocation of seats to Muslims. The Reforms document played its own part in sniping at the Lucknow Pact by levying a series of objections to it and dismissed it as an "unworkable machine" by suggesting that it was needlessly generous to the minority community!

²⁰ *An Indian Diary*, Edwin Montagu, Heinemann, 1930, p. 118.

And yet the same Reforms made no bones about extending the evil of separate electorates and incorporating it in the Act of 1919. Thus, by an adroit manoeuvre, both the Government and its Muslim supporters sidetracked the Congress demand for self-government to India. The fiasco of 1916 became a standard pattern for all subsequent attempts at Hindu-Muslim concord.

Mahatma Gandhi, who had made the promotion of unity between the two communities one of the most cherished missions of his life, failed disastrously in his attempts. The defeat of Turkey in the First World War and the plans of the victorious Allied Powers to dismember the Ottoman Empire, deeply wounded Indian Muslim sentiment. Turkey, described by Tsar Nicholas of Russia, as the "sickman" of Europe and notorious for its backwardness, held a special place in the heart of the Islamic world since its ruler, the Sultan, was also the spiritual head of the Muslim fraternity. Indian stalwarts like Gandhi and Tilak shared the resentment of their Muslim countrymen at the prospect of the Khalifate being dislodged from its primacy. But evidently none of these leaders gave deep thought to the rights and wrongs of the issue, since the restoration of full pre-war status to Turkey would have really meant the reimposition of the hated Ottoman yoke on the liberated Arabs and Armenians.

Writing in *Young India* on May 11, 1921, Gandhi declared that the Khilafat question gave the Hindus and Muslims the opportunity of a lifetime to unite. "If the Hindus," he wrote, "wish to cultivate eternal friendship with the Mussalmans, they must perish with them in the attempt to vindicate the honour of Islam." Jinnah, the future founder of Pakistan, did not, however, share the Mahatma's enthusiasm. He held, with admirable realism, that the fate of distant Turkey and of its Khalif was none of India's concern. The Nizam of Hyderabad, a consummate opportunist, banned the Khilafat agitation in his State. Gandhi's non-co-operation campaign of 1920, however, aroused considerable enthusiasm in the country, but the fraternal fervour that drew the members of the two communities together did not last long. The rise of Mustafa Kemal to power in Turkey delivered a death-blow to the movement.

Kemal hated the Ottoman Empire which he regarded as a "crazy structure based on broken religious foundations". He was convinced that until religion was gone, it was impossible to make of his country a vigorous modern nation. He accordingly secularised the whole State in 1924 and abolished the Khalifate which he dismissed as the lumber of history. The Ataturk was furious at the intrusion of the Aga Khan in the affairs of his country and took the opportunity of unearthing the history of His Highness: "He is," declared the Turkish leader, "a special agent of the English."²¹

In India, the attempted emigration of some 18,000 illiterate and credulous Muslims to Afghanistan in August 1920, with all its tragic consequences, and the savage uprising of the fanatical Moplahs on the west coast in the summer of 1921, revealed how dangerous it was to harness religious bigotry to political ends. Maulana Mohamed Ali who, together with his brother Shaukat Ali, had shone like a luminous star on the political firmament during the days of the Khilafat agitation, delivered the *coup de grace* to Gandhi's leadership by declaring in 1924 that, however pure the Mahatma's character was, he could not in the matter of religion be superior to "any Musalman even though he be without character" !²²

The constitutional proposals, embodied in the Motilal Nehru Report of 1928, were not only a reply to Birkenhead's challenge to Indians to prepare an "agreed scheme", but also offered an equitable basis for Hindu-Muslim co-operation in striving for national freedom. Besides demanding that the realisation of Dominion Status by India should not be treated as a distant goal, the Nehru Committee boldly grasped the communal nettle by asking for the abolition of representation by religion. Apart from the fact that separate electorates had tended to violate the basic principles of responsible government, they were inimical to the working of democracy in terms of government by a political majority. The only communal safeguard should, therefore, be reservation of seats, which concession should, however, be confined to Muslims and to no other community except the Hindus in the North-West Frontier Province. Seats should be reserved

²¹ *Grey Wolf: Mustafa Kemal*, H. C. Armstrong, 1932, p. 246.

²² *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Thacker, 1946, p. 296.

for the Muslims at the Centre and in those provinces where they were in a minority. No such concession would be available to them where they were in a majority. In addition, they were free to contest other than reserved seats, but should claim no "weightage".

Further concessions were envisaged for them. The North-West Frontier Province should be given the same status as other Provinces, while Sind, another Muslim-majority region, should be detached from Bombay and constituted into a separate province. Though repudiated by the authors of the Report, the recommendation relating to these administrative adjustments actually amounted to conceding the Muslim demand for the statutory predominance of the Muslims in the areas where they were numerically superior. The Committee further suggested that a Declaration of Rights should be included in the future constitution assuring, among other things, the fullest liberty of conscience and religion to all. The document also discussed the place to be assigned to the princely States in free India.

As was to be expected, the Nehru Report failed to receive the consideration it deserved both from the Government and the Muslim League. The latter rejected it out of hand on the ground that the proposals did not meet its mounting sectional demands. On January 1, 1929, the All-India Muslim Conference declared in the most emphatic terms that no constitution would be acceptable to Indian Mussulmans unless it embodied all their separatist aspirations. It is small wonder that the Aga Khan presided over the Conference. Jinnah, whose political convictions were steadily undergoing a change following the advent of Gandhi as Congress leader, endorsed the Conference's rejection of the Nehru Report and unhesitatingly embraced the Right wing of the League led by Sir Muhammad Shafi.

Jinnah was not content with this move. On March 28, 1929, he put forward a series of claims on behalf of Muslims, which have become famous as Jinnah's Fourteen Points. Students of Indian history should read this document with care in order to realise that the foundations of Pakistan were well and truly laid in the demands contained in it. "The form of the future constitution," it reads, "should be federal with the residuary powers vested in the provinces." Such a claim could be conceded only

by abandoning the policy of centralisation which began as far back as 1773 when the Regulating Act was passed. In a vast country like India, with varied interests calling for reconciliation, it is imperative to have a strong principal government, irrespective of the number or the composition of the constituent units. Jinnah asked that no future territorial redistribution should affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province and urged the separation of Sind from Bombay. Representation of the communal groups should continue on the basis of separate electorates although it was open to any community to opt for joint electorates. The document also demanded that all legislatures and other elected bodies in the country should provide for an "adequate and effective representation of minorities" in every province without reducing the majority to a minority or even equality. Muslim representation in the Central legislature should not be less than one-third. No cabinet, either Central or provincial, should be formed "without there being a proportion of at least one-third Muslim ministers". No bill or resolution should be passed in any legislature if three-fourths of the members of any community opposed it. No change should be made in the constitution without the concurrence of the federal units.

At that time, Jinnah still believed in the efficacy of the parliamentary system of government for India. But his fourteen points did not explain how the concept of joint responsibility, inherent in the cabinet system, could be upheld if the team of ministers were to be drawn from legislators who owed their election to a plethora of sectional interests. In fact, the issue assumed considerable importance in 1937 when the Congress took office in the provinces under the Act of 1935. Its refusal to accommodate fully the Muslim League's claim for a place in the Congress ministry in the United Provinces led to a mighty uproar and to the eventual partition of India. Whether or not Jinnah realised the potency of his demands when he framed them, it was only necessary to enlarge them from time to time, not only to make the working of the parliamentary system of government in the country impossible, but also to pave the way for the creation of a separate "homeland" for his co-religionists. Even the Simon Commission, with its pronounced leanings towards the

Muslims, felt constrained to object to the extravagance of their demands, as exemplified by Jinnah's Fourteen Points.²³

Mahatma Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference, which opened in London on September 7, 1931, with the object of securing the transfer of power to India and was determined to demonstrate to the world that the problem of the minorities could never be settled unless the responsibility for the government of the country was thrown squarely on the shoulders of the Indians themselves. In an assembly of what Nehru called "vested interests—imperialist, feudal, financial, industrial, religious, communal—", it was in the fitness of things that "the leadership of the British Indian delegation should usually fall to the Aga Khan". Gandhi invited this astonishing person to name his terms for making a united demand on the British. He could perhaps have more fruitfully engaged himself in trying to squeeze oil from sand! His Highness declined to be a party to any such hazardous undertaking and took refuge behind the plea that recognition of communal claims was a pre-condition to everything.²⁴

The late Aga Khan was one of the most remarkable men in the political and communal history of India. He was the darling of all champions of diehardism and the *status quo*. Leaving Jinnah high and dry at the Round Table Conference, he persevered in ensuring that India drew a blank from the proceedings. The description of this man by Lord Templewood, who, as Sir Samuel Hoare, played a crucial part in the constitutional discussions, is noteworthy: "Pope, Prince, accomplished man of two worlds, eastern and western, equally well-known on the race course, in the casinos of Europe, and the mosques of Africa and India, a consummate diplomat and an untiring peace-maker, the Aga at once took a foremost place at the Round Table."²⁵ It is small wonder that, being thus

²³ *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission* (Simon Commission), Vol. 2, 1930, p. 71.

²⁴ *Nehru: A Political Biography*, Michael Brecher, Oxford, 1959, p. 180.

²⁵ *Nine Troubled Years*, Viscount Templewood, Collins, 1954, p. 51. Templewood's observations on Jinnah's role at the Round Table Conferences are interesting. He writes, "He (Jinnah) never seemed to work with anyone. . . . Sometimes he gave us the impression that he did not wish to go beyond provincial autonomy, and at other times, that he demanded responsible government both in the Centre and in the Provinces. It was this elusiveness that made it difficult for us to co-operate with him, or for him to give any clear lead to his Moslem colleagues" (Ibid, p. 52).

equipped this prince without a principality successfully brought the issue of India's freedom to an *impasse* !

The secret circular of Sir Edward Benthall, the spokesman of the European commercial interests in India at the Round Table Conference, and the interminable behind-the-scene machinations of a number of others, made it abundantly clear that the aim of the deliberations was not to frame a constitution for the transfer of power to India, but, as Gandhi said with becoming indignation, to get hold of a carcass and to "perform the laudable feat" of dissecting it. Following these wasted efforts, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, drew up his own scheme for the composition of the new Indian legislatures and presented it on August 4, 1932, as the Award of his Government. As was to be expected, the scheme was designed to weaken further the will of the Indian minorities to make common cause with the rest of their countrymen. Besides giving the Muslims all that they wanted and much more, it elevated the British commercial community in Bengal to a unique position by granting it a representation that bore no relation whatsoever to its numerical strength. The Hindus were, of course, the worst sufferers and received a raw deal both in the Punjab and Bengal. In both these provinces, they were given a representation below the proportion of their population.²⁶

Not being content with these disruptive provisions, the Communal Award attempted to stamp the Depressed Classes as a minority community by giving them the right of separate representation. Gandhi, who regarded the "new deal" to them as the last straw, undertook a fast unto death to secure its abrogation. The result was the conclusion of what is known as the Poona Pact, September 25, 1932, which saved the Hindu community from dismemberment. The Pact granted bigger concessions to the Depressed Classes who agreed to exercise their franchise through general electorates on a somewhat novel basis.

The MacDonald Award, however, saw the fulfilment of the constitution-makers' dream of transforming the Indian electorates into a congeries of disparate groups, divided between the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, the British community

²⁶ *Constitutional Proposals of the Sapru Committee*: Report compiled by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, M. R. Jayakar, Sir N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar and Kunwar Sir Jagdish Prasad, 1945, p. 111.

in India, Indian Christians, commerce and industry, landlords and capitalists, labour, University graduates and women. This patently undemocratic handiwork of the British Prime Minister was applauded by the Joint Committee on the Indian Constitutional Reform as a "well thought out and balanced" scheme. But actually the Award "exacerbated communal feelings rather than calmed them".²⁷ The Act of 1935, the last constitutional instrument given to India by the British Government, ensured that this unique electoral mill-stone was firmly tied round the neck of her people.

It would be naïve to suggest that the minorities were encouraged to feather their own nests because the policy-makers were genuinely interested in their future. There is no historical evidence to show that a subject people are loved and admired by their rulers, and it is inconceivable that the Muslims of India could have been an exception to this rule, more especially when they laboured under the additional disadvantage of educational and economic backwardness. They were in fact used as convenient pawns in the complicated game of political chess in the hope of checkmating Indian nationalism. Morley's solicitude for the Muslims was a mere make-believe and this is borne out by his own admission that he had grown weary of their spokesmen. "We have to take care," he wrote, "that in picking up the Mussalman we don't drop our Hindu parcels." Indeed, nothing was to be done to disturb the elaborate system of checks and balances, upon which the Government so heavily depended since the post-mutiny period. The authors of the Montford Reforms were convinced that any system of communal electorates was "a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle", for obviously division by classes and creeds led to the creation of political camps organised against each other and taught men to think as partisans and not as citizens.

Despite this realisation, the Reforms incorporated this vicious system because it was imperative to reward the Muslims who, "with a few unimportant exceptions", had held "severely aloof from the revolutionary movement and retained their traditional attitude of sturdy loyalty" to the Raj throughout the troubled years 1907-10. Categorical assurances were repeatedly given to

²⁷ *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, 1921-47* Vol. I, selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, Oxford, 1957, p. xlii.

the minorities that on no account would the British Government repudiate its "obligations" to them. Speaking in the House of Commons on February 29, 1932, Sir Samuel Hoare declared: "We ask the representatives of the minorities, particularly the representatives of the Muslim community that has with great faith and loyalty abstained from non-co-operation, to believe in our sincerity and to be patient if, in the inevitable process of events, we do not rush into a premature decision."²⁸

Thus, both by speech and action, the policy-makers destroyed all opportunities for the principal elements of the population to come together in the hope of building a united India. The confirmation of the system of communal representation, the elevation of the North-West Frontier Province to the status of a Governor's Province in April 1932, the constitution of Sind into a separate province in April 1936, the grant of a statutory majority to the Muslims in the Punjab and of a similar advantage to them over the Hindus in Bengal, the provision of an over-generous weightage to them in the other provinces, and guarantees of preferential treatment in other walks of life, were all calculated to whet the appetite of the community for more concessions, which could only end in India's partition. Conscious of the fact that it had only to name its price for abstaining from joining the "seditious ranks", in order to secure it from the Government, the Muslim League, which towards the end of the thirties spearheaded Muslim separatism with unsurpassed vigour, saw no reason why it should have any dealings with the Congress at all. The formation of Congress ministries in 1937 and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 created new problems in India which could only be solved by destroying her position as a single country.²⁹

²⁸ *Speeches by the Rt. Hon. Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, 1931-36*, p. 16.

²⁹ Preferential treatment to the Muslims was really a matter of policy and would have been abandoned if they had opted for Indian independence as aggressively as the Congress did. There were other weapons in the Government's armoury. The concept of "minorities" was made all-embracing so that even the princely States were brought within its scope. Amery made this point clear when he said: "The main elements in Indian national life include not only political organisations and the great religious and cultural communities of India; they also include geographical and administrative entities, the provinces of British India, more especially those which have not thrown away the responsibility for self-government and the States." (*India and Freedom*, L. S. Amery, Oxford, 1942, p. 94.) India's right to freedom could be countenanced only if all these "main elements" endorsed such an amazing proposition!

The Congress, which had consistently demanded national independence, viewed with abhorrence the Act of 1935 which contained all the ingenious provisions which a holding Power could invent for perpetuating the *status quo*. Nevertheless, it decided to give a trial to what Nehru called the "slave constitution" and accordingly fought the 1936-37 elections. It won a resounding victory at the polls, annexing as many as 711 seats out of a total of 1,585. Its achievement was all the more remarkable because only 657 seats were "general" or open, the rest being fragmented among Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Europeans, landholders and others. The Congress assumed the responsibilities of government in Bombay, Madras, the Central Province, the United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa in July 1937 and did likewise in the North-West Frontier Province a little later. In October of the following year a coalition ministry was formed in Assam under its tutelage. The party thus controlled eight out of eleven provinces, the work of supervising the activities of the ministries being entrusted to a Board consisting of Sardar Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Rajendra Prasad.

In the affairs of men, nothing is perhaps a more thankless task than to speculate on the possible and the contingent, but the unhappy events that led to the partition of India could perhaps have been averted if the Muslim League had given even a moderately good account of itself in the 1936-37 elections and been able to form a ministry in its own right at least in one province. In that event, Jinnah's towering and massive *amour propre* would not have been offended nor would it have provoked his pent-up dislike for the Congress beyond endurance. Unfortunately, it did not win a single seat in Bihar, the Central Provinces and Orissa and similarly drew a blank in the Muslim-majority provinces of Sind and the North-West Frontier. Its electoral victory in the Punjab, a key Muslim province, was confined to a single seat.³⁰ Its total gains, out of 485 Muslim seats, amounted to 108 so that in none of the eleven British Indian provinces was it in a position to assume the responsibilities of government. The resulting frustration and resentment

³⁰ *India Divided*, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Hind Kitabs, 1946, Table II, p. 135.

of its leader were at the root of his subsequent attitude towards the Congress and furnished the driving force for the partition movement.

The ministerial episode in the United Provinces gave the League its opportunity to organise a mighty opposition to the forces of nationalism in the country. The party's election manifesto was undoubtedly as forward-looking as that of the Congress and its gains at the polls in the United Provinces were largely due to the support given to it by the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind in the hope that the two organisations, namely, the Congress and the League, would co-operate in forming a ministry in the province. The League's gains in the U.P. were 27 seats out of a total of 64 Muslim seats, the balance of 37 having gone to other Muslim groups. The point at issue at the time was not whether the League should or should not merge its identity into the Congress in order to secure a representation in the U.P. Cabinet, but how many seats should be given to it. Maulana Azad, who presented a document to the League's provincial chief, Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, for endorsing the merger, had no doubt in his mind that the unification of the two parties would have taken place in the province if the Congress had fulfilled its original promise of giving two seats in the Cabinet to the League's representatives, instead of one, and accused Nehru of reversing the earlier decision.³¹ From the discussions that were held by Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant, who headed the Congress ministry in U.P., with Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, it is evident that the League leaders were much keener about the number of seats than about the rights and wrongs of signing a merger agreement with the Congress. "Pandit Pant asked me," writes the League leader, "how many seats in the Cabinet I would demand in case of a coalition between the Congress and the League. I replied: three in nine and two in six, that is, one-third of the total strength of the Cabinet whatever it may be."³² It was only when the League failed to secure what it wanted that it made a tremendous grievance out of Azad's merger offer.

³¹ *India Wins Freedom*, Maulana Azad, p. 161.

³² *Pathway to Pakistan*, Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, p. 160.

Whether the Congress was or was not right in not agreeing to take both Nawab Ismail Khan and Choudhry Khaliquzzaman into the U.P. ministry is a side issue. Perhaps, it would have been good if it had accepted both, but when the ministry was ultimately formed, it did contain two Muslim members out of six. One of them had won his seat on the Congress ticket, while the other was re-elected by a large majority over a League opponent after resigning his seat, won earlier as a League candidate. The League, it must be remembered, was, to quote Prof. Coupland, "a wholly communal organisation, more like the Hindu Mahasabha than the Congress". It believed in separate electorates and in preferential treatment for Muslims, with the intensity of an obsession, and was determined to maintain its exclusiveness at all costs. By what logic was it entitled to claim a decisive voice in the making of the Congress ministries, especially when the Congress methods for securing national independence were so anathematic to it? The Congress had no illusions about the Act of 1935 and one of the reasons for its accepting office was to expose its inadequacies. Would the League, bound as it was with indissoluble ties of loyalty to the Raj, have co-operated with the Congress in this undertaking? Again, how were the Muslim members, elected on the non-League tickets, less representative than those of that party? It will be recalled that as many as 37 out of 64 Muslim seats were held by the non-League Muslims in the U.P.

None of these weighty considerations, however, prevailed with the League when it launched its raging and tearing campaign against the Congress ministries. Jinnah fired the first shot at the 26th session of the Muslim League at Lucknow in 1937 when he accused the Congress leaders of "alienating the Mussalmans of India" by pursuing an "exclusively" Hindu policy which, he alleged, was reflected in the activities of the ministries controlled by them. The charge-sheet framed against the Congress may be recalled briefly so that we may judge how serious the complaints were to warrant the country's subsequent division, with all its disastrous consequences.

First, the national song *Bande Mataram* was objected to, despite the fact that it was being sung at every Congress session at least from the beginning of the present century. Jinnah was

a member of the Congress for over fifteen years and yet during that long period he did not find the song offensive to Muslim sentiment. Secondly, the tri-colour flag was popularized during the Khilafat movement which was basically Muslim in character, but it was not acceptable to the League *now*. The third objection was even more novel. The League refused to concede the right of the Congress to make common cause with the Muslim masses on the ground that it alone had such a right! This stand was evidently a prelude to its subsequent assertion that all those Muslims who did not belong to the League were mere "Quislings" and not the true representatives of their community. The fourth item in the indictment was the Wardha scheme of basic education which had in fact been drawn up under the guidance of an eminent Muslim educationist, Dr. Zakir Hussain, now the Vice-President of the Indian Union. The essential soundness of the scheme had been endorsed by the Sargent Report on Indian education. Similarly, the untenability of the agitation against the Vidya Mandir scheme of the Central Province was fully demonstrated by the amicable settlement that was subsequently reached on the issue between Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, the then Secretary of the League and later the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Pandit Shukla, the Premier of the Province. Lastly, the long-standing controversy over Hindi and Urdu was magnified into a major Muslim grievance.

This is the catalogue of the "atrocities", of which the Congress was accused and "investigating" bodies were appointed by the League to study and report on the dangers that threatened the existence of Islam in India. And when, following the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, the Congress ministries resigned on the issue of Britain's war and peace aims in the context of the Indian demand, Jinnah and his followers celebrated the event on December 22, 1939, as a Deliverance Day.

What impartial testimony could Jinnah and his party produce in support of their indictment? Speaking at Calcutta on January 3, 1938, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, declared that the "Governments that hold power in the autonomous provinces have shown in a marked degree a sense of responsibility and

readiness to face the facts of the situation by which they may find themselves confronted". Sir Harry Haig, former Governor of the United Provinces, delivered an address in London on the record of the Congress ministries, with Sir Hugh O'Neil, the then Under-Secretary of State for India, in the chair. Sir Harry said: "In dealing with questions raising communal issues, the Ministers, in my judgment, normally acted with impartiality and a desire to do what was fair. The Congress administration on its constructive side has been inspired by enthusiasm, imagination and a considerable degree of idealism."

No less a person than Maulana Azad, a profound theologian, dismissed the "atrocities" stories as mere canards and impudent lies. He was in charge of Congress parliamentary affairs in Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Sind and the North-West Frontier Province and had, therefore, intimate knowledge of the working of the Ministries. He wrote: "Every incident which involved communal issues came up before me. From personal knowledge and with a full sense of responsibility, I can, therefore, say that the charges levelled by Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League with regard to injustice to Muslims and other minorities were absolutely false. If there had been an iota of truth in any of these charges, I would have seen to it that the injustice was rectified. I was even prepared to resign, if necessary, on an issue like this."³³

The Congress was determined to let the world know how baseless the League's accusations were. Throughout the years 1938 and 1939, efforts were made by its leaders, including Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Rajendra Prasad and Subhas Chandra Bose, to persuade Jinnah to place his cards on the table. But the League leader was not concerned with facts. His reactions to Congress challenge were, therefore, distinguished for their evasiveness and offensive language. Writing to Gandhi on March 3, 1938, he demanded that he and the League should be recognised as the sole representatives of the Muslims of India and that the Mahatma in his turn should accept a similar position in relation to the Congress and the Hindus. He did not, however, explain how the battle over credentials was relevant to his allegations about the "atrocities" of the Congress mini-

³³ *India Wins Freedom*, Maulana Azad, p. 22.

stries. Asked by Nehru to state in clear and categorical terms what exactly were the points in dispute, the League leader rejoined: "I am only amazed at your ignorance"! In another letter, he told Nehru: "Having regard to your mentality, it is really difficult for me to make you understand the position any further."³⁴ The Congress President demanded that, since the charges made against his organisation were serious, they should be examined by an impartial authority. "We would like," he wrote to Jinnah, "this course to be adopted in regard to any specific instances that are put forward. If you agree, we could request the highest judicial authority, Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of the Federal Court, to enquire into this matter." The League leader refused to accept the challenge. In fact, he was now least interested in such matters. He had closely watched the totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy and their *modus operandi* in gaining their ends. The war clouds were beginning to gather thick and fast over the horizon and sooner or later they were bound to deluge the world with blood and tears. A consummate tactician, he knew that war and the British Government were sure to discover his destiny for him. The author of the Fourteen Points, the very first point of which had asked that "the form of the future constitution should be federal", no longer saw any use for such a provision. In September 1939, the Working Committee of the Muslim League declared that the party was "irrevocably opposed to any 'federal objective' which must necessarily result in a majority-community rule under the guise of democracy and a parliamentary system of government". It added: "Such a constitution is totally unsuited to the genius of the peoples of this country which is composed of various nationalities and does not constitute a national State."

With this new thesis as the basis of its policy, the League found itself compelled to adopt the "two-nation" doctrine and to demand a separate "homeland" for the Muslim "nation". Jinnah, the nationalist, had now burnt his boots. Belonging originally to the Hindu stock and known in his boyhood as Jinnahbhai—*bhai* being a common suffix to Hindu names in the Gujarati language, his mother tongue—this former apostle

³⁴ *The Indian Annual Register*, January-June 1938, pp. 367, 375.

of Hindu-Muslim unity became its most implacable foe. "We maintain and hold," he wrote to Gandhi in September 1944, "that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definitions or tests of a nation. We are a nation of a hundred million, and, what is more, we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of values and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions—in short, we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law we are a nation." A very assertive definition indeed! Now that communalism was due to find its fulfilment, even the most untenable and unbalanced statements by its supreme exponent were accepted as gospel truth.

10. THE GANDHIAN ERA

THE advent of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to Indian politics was an event of historic importance. He had won his spurs in South Africa as a man of action, and India was in desperate need of a leadership that could infuse new life and vigour into her inert and inarticulate masses and harness their energies to the national cause. Gandhi's non-violent movement had given courage and dignity to the oppressed and demoralised Indian settlers in that country. His uncompromising adherence to truth, his sense of fair-play, his fearlessness, and his innate goodness and moderation, had won for him a reputation as an uncommon political leader who never allowed the ends to dominate the means. As far back as 1914, Professor Gilbert Murray made a remarkable appraisal of Gandhi's calibre. He wrote: "Be careful in dealing with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasures, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase over his soul."

Gandhi's political adversary in South Africa, General Smuts, who, in a speech in October 1906, had declared his determination to eradicate the "Asiatic cancer" from the body politic of his country, was forced to come to terms with the Indian leader. Writing about Gandhi in 1939, when both men were in the plenitude of their masterful leadership, the South African statesman said: "He never forgot the human background of the situation, never lost his temper or succumbed to hate, and preserved his gentle humour in the most trying situations". In fact, men like Gandhi "redeem us from a sense of commonplace and futility, and are an inspiration to us not to weary in well-doing."¹

¹ *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work*, edited by S. Radhakrishnan, George Allen and Unwin, 1939, p. 276.

Such was the man who returned to India in January 1915 after fulfilling his mission in South Africa. The political scene that unfolded itself before him in the country was none too pleasing. He saw in his motherland, not the image of a great and glorious nation, but that of what Tagore called an "eternal ragpicker at other people's dustbins". Like that of the Poet, Gandhi's heart bled at the stark poverty of his people, their degradation, and their unmanly indifference to the future of their country. The time for action had come and fortunately the ground had been well prepared by a galaxy of patriots who had for decades laboured in their own way in advancing India's claim to self-determination. Men like Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Surendranath Banerjea, Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, Badrudin Tyabji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale had succeeded in disturbing the conscience of the bureaucracy by their frank and well-reasoned criticisms, while others had caused it greater uneasiness by advocating action against its obstinacy. "Educate, agitate and organise", was Lokmanya Tilak's clarion-call to his countrymen. It was given to Gandhi to consolidate these gains and to take the national movement many steps forward by giving it the strength of mass support. He was able to accomplish this mighty task because from the first he identified himself fully and enthusiastically with the poor, the lowly and the feeble.

Gandhi did not begin his public life as a political iconoclast, determined to break the British idol. Like most of his contemporaries, he sincerely believed that India's apprenticeship to the British Government would yield beneficent results to her. It was this conviction which had persuaded him to render active assistance to the British during their wars with the Boers and the Zulus, although his own sympathies were all on the other side. He won a medal for his services during the First World War when he busied himself as a recruiting agent for the armed services. Besides, as a disciple of Gokhale, he was by conviction a man of temperate political views. And yet the force of circumstances drove him to range himself against the greatest empire in the world and fight it to a standstill.

Gandhi performed this great feat by forging a unique weapon against the bureaucracy. He refused to recognise the validity of a government that did not rest on the consent of the governed. The mass uprising, which he organised through non-

violent non-co-operation, was in complete accord with the civilized canons of protest and resistance to an unresponsive authority. He was, therefore, not an anarchist, but a crusader on behalf of popular rights and of moral principles. In fact, Gandhi's *satyagraha* and civil disobedience campaigns saved the country from violence and chaos. Mettlesome youngmen, who chafed at the inaction of their political leaders, could not be weaned from the cult of the bomb by merely preaching to them sermons on moderation. The Congress, as a middle-class organisation, could not expect to retain their loyalties unless it was prepared to broad-base itself radically. The day when it could still function as a mere propaganda society was long past.

Gandhi imparted unparalleled dynamism to Indian politics by making it possible for tens of thousands of men and women to take an active part in a number of agitations, the ultimate aim of all of which was to win national freedom. Whether it was the boycott of foreign goods or of the unwanted constitutional reforms, whether it was a protest against repressive laws or whether it was a no-tax campaign, participation in them on a mass scale by all classes of people, irrespective of their age, sex or station in life, gave them a sense of achievement which could never be experienced through any number of petitions and memorials drafted in what Tagore called a "correct, grammatical whine". It was Gandhi's *forte* for action and the response of the people to his call that really killed terrorism as a force in the country. "The greatness of this achievement," says *The Oxford History of India*, "should not be underestimated because of the completeness of its success. In fact, he may be said to have kept Indian opinion on the constitutional path, for his campaigns against government were so closely related to moral principle that they may be considered *extra* rather than anti-constitutional. He brought in the moral law to supplement rather than supplant official law, and thus saved India during the British period from large-scale terrorism, massacre, and race-hatred."²

It did not take long for India to recognise the stature of the new leader. Gandhi gave signal proofs of his capacity for frankness when addressing a large and distinguished gathering,

² *The Oxford History of India*, 1958, p. 765.

which included many princes, on the occasion of the inauguration of Banaras University. Speaking on February 4, 1916, he told his audience that rank, office and title and all the solemn plausibilities of the world were a cruel mockery in a country like India where the majority of the people starved. His assertion that the ruling princes were a debilitating survival from an irrational past deeply offended their Order and its protectors, especially when the rebuke was administered by a man who in his appearance and apparel looked like a rustic! The speech caused a profound stir in the country and Gandhi's expulsion from the Holy City was narrowly averted through Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's intervention.

The first trial of strength between him and entrenched vested interests took place in the following year. The district of Champaran in Bihar had long been a colony of British planters who had established a large number of factories there for the production of dyes. Few among them were scrupulous and many of their managers, to quote John Beames, a responsible Civil Servant, were "rough, uneducated men, hard drinkers, loose livers and destitute of sympathy for the natives".³ The planters had gained complete control over the peasantry whom they forced to cultivate indigo for feeding their factories. The sufferings of the farmers were ignored and the more courageous and assertive ones among them were ruthlessly suppressed by the planters and their henchmen who often took the law into their own hands. When in the early years of the twentieth century, the dye industry in Germany had developed synthetic indigo and the world market for the natural-grown commodity fell, the Champaran planters lost all interest in the enterprise and sharply raised the land rent, besides making other financial demands on the impoverished farmers in order to compensate themselves for the loss of their business. Such exactions amounted to as much as Rs. 25 lakhs.⁴

The distress of the peasants of Champaran would perhaps have continued for many more years if Gandhi had not been apprised of their plight. In April 1917, he visited Motih the headquarters of the district, and, in defiance of the quit

³ *Memories of a Bengal Civilian*, John Beames, Chatto and Windus, 1961, p. 172.

⁴ *Rajendra Prasad: Autobiography*, 1957, p. 89.

order, conducted a thorough investigation into the farmers' grievances. The case against the planters was decisive. The Lieutenant-Governor of the province rose to the occasion and appointed a high-power commission to study the issue and to make suitable recommendations to the Government. At his request, Gandhi served on the expert body and eventually promoted a settlement which, while portraying his genius for compromise on contributory details, brought freedom to the much-harassed peasantry from the planters' greed and rapacity. Throughout the controversies and negotiations, his relations with the planters remained friendly and cordial. Champaran gave the first triumph to Gandhi's civil disobedience in India.

Nothing that had happened so far could disturb his belief in Britain's capacity for fair-play. We thus see him in July 1918 moving from place to place and exhorting the people to join the Army. In an unequivocal declaration of his political faith, he said : "Partnership in the Empire is our definite goal," and added "if the Empire perishes, with it perish our cherished aspirations." Gandhi, the co-operator, pledged himself to work the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms for what they were worth. The Kaira *satyagraha*, staged in the same year in order to secure concessions in the land revenue assessment on behalf of the peasants of this Gujarat district, did not deflect him from his resolve to try and win freedom for his country through co-operation with the bureaucracy.

But disillusionment came to him soon. The introduction of the Criminal Law Amendment Bills, more widely known as the Rowlatt Bills, in the Imperial Legislative Council in February 1918, conferring on the executive sweeping powers of preventive detention of all suspected political agitators, and their enactment into law in defiance of the most impassioned protests by such well-known Moderate leaders as Sir Surendranath Banerjea and the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, forced Gandhi to have second thoughts on the prevailing Indo-British relationship. The oppressive regime of Sir Michael O'Dwyer in the Punjab, General Dyer's heartless massacre of unarmed Indians at Jallianwala Baugh on April 13, 1919, the general approval and appreciation which the excesses of the bureaucracy in that Province and elsewhere received at the hands of the policy-makers, and Britain's inability to assuage the outraged sentiments of Indian

Muslims on the Khilafat issue, made a profound impact on Gandhi's political outlook and transformed him into an entirely new leader. He was now convinced that it was impossible and indeed imprudent to meet the bureaucracy's mailed fist with mere platform protests or even by fiery speeches. Action alone mattered and he decided to take it.

The Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress held in December 1920, is a landmark in the history of the country's struggle for freedom. It was a large gathering and consisted of 14,582 delegates. Muslims had mustered strong; there was also a sizeable contingent of women delegates. The session was a great personal triumph for Gandhi, who thenceforward became the supreme leader of the organisation and the guide, philosopher and friend of the Indian nation. The Congress, which since its inception in 1885 had trodden on the path of "constitutionalism" with unfaltering consistency, now changed its goal from "self-government within the Empire" to "the attainment of *swaraj* by all legitimate and peaceful means". The amendment to the party's constitution was significant. Apart from the fact that the term *swaraj* was capable of any convenient interpretation, thus keeping the door for negotiation always open, the revised constitution gave the party's *imprimatur* to Gandhi's method of political action. In fact, the simple phrases had all the potency of transforming the Congress from an "upper-class urban club into a nation-wide mass organisation capable of penetrating the heart of Indian society, the village".

The civil disobedience movement of 1921-22, launched under Gandhi's leadership, lasted for some fourteen months and was directed towards securing redress for the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs. An appeal was made to the people to stand steadfast by the Congress. Renunciation of titles and honours given by the Government, abandonment of the law courts and the educational institutions, withdrawal from Government service, and refusal to pay taxes,—these constituted the major planks in the party's political platform. Gandhi was convinced that the bureaucracy, no matter how strong or obstinate it was, could be brought to its senses if his programme of non-cooperation could be enforced both in the letter and in the spirit for a period of twelve months. "*Swaraj* in one year" was, there-

fore, not a mere slogan, but a declaration of Gandhi's faith in his people to struggle and sacrifice for their country.

The response to his call was splendid. His many meetings with the new Viceroy, Lord Reading, between May 13-18, 1921, bore no tangible results. Respected leaders from all over the country were seized and sentenced generally to short terms of imprisonment. In December, the two Nehrus and C. R. Das were arrested and sent to prison. Gandhi was now raised to the pedestal of Mahatma or Great Soul by his countrymen and the bureaucracy did not consider it prudent to spirit him away from the scene of his activities. Official repression assumed frightening proportions and provoked the anger of even pro-Government public men. Indiscriminate arrests and maltreatment of arrested persons; their secret trial in prison; severe sentences; detention without trial, and arrests of women, were certainly not appropriate measures to herald the advent of a new era of constitutional progress in India. Some 30,000 civil resisters filled the jails.

The willingness on the part of large numbers of Indians to make any sacrifice on behalf of their country unnerved the bureaucracy. Reporting the Indian situation to the Secretary of State in February 1922, the Viceroy was forced to admit that the non-co-operation movement had been "engendered and sustained by nationalist aspirations". Lord Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, was even more candid and conceded that the bureaucracy was really scared by the Congress movement. "Gandhi's," he wrote, "was the most colossal experiment in world history, and it came within an inch of succeeding."⁵ The challenge posed to the Raj by the Mahatma's movement was indeed far more formidable than the outbreak of 1857.

The visit of the Duke of Connaught to India in January 1921 to inaugurate the Montford Reforms was really intended to placate Indian opinion. Opening the new legislature in Delhi, the Duke appealed to Indians and British alike in the country to "bury along with the dead past the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, to forgive where you have to forgive, and to join hands and work together to realise the hopes that arise from today". These were sweet and soothing words, but, in

⁵ *Nehru: A Political Biography*, Michael Brecher, Oxford, 1959, p. 79.

his famous letter to the Duke, Gandhi asked for matching action in order to meet Indian aspirations. There was no reply to his demand. The King's uncle, was later followed by the Prince of Wales who arrived in this country in November. Two royal visits in one year were too much to the guardians of law and order and to India's impoverished exchequer. There was no reply to Gandhi's charge that the Prince's visit had been arranged in order to advertise the 'benign' character of British rule in India. In no part of the vast country was the royal visitor greeted with popular enthusiasm.

Gandhi's rise to supreme leadership caused disquiet not only to the officials, but also to many Indian politicians. The collapse of the Khilafat movement, following Kemal Ataturk's expulsion of the effete Khalif, and the rehabilitation of Turkey into a modern State, greatly thinned the ranks of the Muslims in the Congress, as many of them, to quote *The Oxford History of India*, returned to "communal politics".⁶ Other men of moderate political persuasion had left the Congress earlier and were functioning under the label of the National Liberal Federation of India, the first session of which was held in Bombay in November 1918. Many of them, including Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. M. R. Jayakar, later became elder statesmen, seeking incessantly to bridge the widening gulf between the Congress and the bureaucracy. As *India in 1921-22*, an official Report, prepared by Professor L. F. Rushbrook Williams, observes, while the non-co-operation movement made a strong appeal to their hearts, their "heads were too cool to succumb to its spell".

The position of Mohammed Ali Jinnah was even more difficult. He was intelligent, able and patriotic. He had risen to commendable eminence in the profession of law and the fervour with which he advocated Hindu-Muslim unity and

⁶ Maulana Mahomed Ali and his brother Maulana Shaukat Ali were Gandhi's most intimate colleagues during the Khilafat crusade. Their *volte face* after the Khilafat fiasco is best illustrated by Mahomed Ali's views on communal issues. Speaking at the Khilafat Conference in May 1926, he declared that it was the duty of every Muslim to convert non-Muslims to Islam. He prayed for the day when he could convert even Mahatma Gandhi to Islam. (*The Indian Quarterly Register*, 1926, Vol. I, p. 411.) This man, who was educated at Aligarh and Oxford and who had been the President of the Congress, held Gandhi as an inferior person because the Mahatma did not belong to his faith. In fact, he considered it his mission to convert the entire humanity to the religion of Mohamed!

national liberation marked him out as a front-rank leader, destined to play a big part in shaping the country's future. 'He looked upon Gokhale, "the wisest and ablest of the moderates", as his exemplar and strove to win a similar position for himself among the Muslims. Addressing the Muslim League, which he was to use with devastating effect in later years for the division of India, he declared in 1916 that he had always been a staunch Congressman and that he was "no lover of sectarian cries". But Jinnah, as many, including Montagu, the Secretary of State, had noticed, was an ambitious man. He bore no affection for the common man and humanity in the mass, with its suffering and sorrow, meant nothing to him. He lived in the upper class atmosphere, with its exclusive and affluent way of life, and was not prepared to descend to *terra firma* on any account. In fact, it was his desire that none should be allowed Congress membership unless one was at least a matriculate! A broad-based organisation, claiming the allegiance of all stratas of society, was evidently not a place for this newly-made political aristocrat.

In a speech at the Imperial Legislative Council, long before the advent of Gandhi, Jinnah had stated his political convictions thus: "I believe in criticising the Government freely and frankly; but at the same time it is the duty of every educated man to support and help the Government when the Government is right."⁷ He could not persuade himself to change this belief, no matter what happened in the subsequent years. His political views were, therefore, identical with those of the Liberals and he detested Gandhi's methods of direct action even more than they did. It is small wonder, therefore, that he turned his back finally on the Congress after its Nagpur session.

But his withdrawal from the national organisation did not free Jinnah from his dilemma. Having spent the best part of his life as a Congressman and with such stalwarts as Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerjea and Gokhale as his models, it was not easy for him to identify himself completely with the communal politics of the Muslim League. Nor could he contemplate with equanimity the prospect of joining the Liberals whom he was to sneer at in later years for cautioning him

⁷ *Eminent Indians*, first edition, p. 439.

against the lack of moderation in his sectional demands. Many among the Liberals were at least his peers in the knowledge of law and in political debate. He was averse to getting himself lost in the galaxy of intellectuals.

From his past record, his only rightful place was thus in the Congress, but he could not return to it for all the wealth of the world. The Congress also abounded in brilliant men, besides humble folk. C. R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, C. Rajagopalachari and K. M. Munshi, to mention only five names, were among the best legal brains in the country. Intellectuals like Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Subhas Chandra Bose and Acharya Kripalani accepted Gandhi's guidance without doubt or demur since they found in his leadership a rare potency for delivering the goods. Amongst women, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Mrs. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya led the rest of their sisters in following the Mahatma, in whom they saw not only a great political liberator, but also a stout-hearted champion of all worthy causes. The Gandhian movement in fact played no small part in freeing the Indian society from many complexes concerning women. Both labour and free enterprise respected him for his fair-mindedness and impartiality.

Nor were the members of the great Muslim community behind in recognising the towering stature of Gandhi, his freedom from religious bias, and his political perception and personal rectitude. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a great Muslim divine and patriot, identified himself whole-heartedly with the Congress and underwent incredible suffering on that account. Dr. M. A. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Asaf Ali, T. K. Sherwani, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, to mention just a few names at random, never counted the cost of joining the Congress and cheerfully went to prison in the cause of their motherland. The Khan brothers of the North-West Frontier Province regarded it as a rank heresy to owe allegiance to any other political body than the Congress. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who has survived his brother Dr. Khan Sahib, is still eating his life away in a Pakistani prison.*

* He has since been released, but his movements are strictly controlled.

Jinnah could not join this band of patriots since it deeply offended his *amour propre* to accept anyone as his equal. He could work only with subordinates and junior colleagues. Nor was it conceivable that a man, who derived his greatest pleasure from gravitating between the drawing room, the council chamber and the law court, could cheerfully face the prospect of receiving baton-blows on his body and of being exposed to the rigours of prison life. Thus, while the stream of Indian nationalism gathered greater volume and velocity, he found himself left high and dry. It is true that he continued to make eloquent speeches and issue forthright statements in support of Indian freedom, but at the same time his own frame of mind and the compulsion of events drove him increasingly into the arms of the communalists, from whom alone he could secure an effective platform in later years. His Fourteen Points, as we saw earlier, were certainly not a model of reasonableness, nor was his attitude to the patently undemocratic system of separate electorates free from equivocation.⁸ Thanks to his pride and jealousy, Jinnah was unwittingly but inexorably working for a situation when a partition of the country alone could satisfy him. His ineffectiveness at the Round Table Conferences in London,⁹ his decision not to return to India, and his eventual emergence as an uncompromising advocate of Muslim communalism bear full testimony to the fact that Congress "radicalism" was at the root of his political apostasy.

But neither the defections from the Congress nor the frequent outbursts of communal violence, mostly in the urban areas, or the temporary setbacks to the civil disobedience move-

⁸ Writing on July 7, 1926, in the London *Times*, Lord Olivier, Secretary of State for India in the Labour Ministry, stated: "Until the communal principle for electoral franchise is eliminated, ordered progress in constitutional government will be impossible."

⁹ Sir George Schuster, who had been Finance Member in Lord Irwin's Executive Council, recalled that Jinnah "had been a complete failure at the Round Table Conference in 1930—so much so, that he did not see fit to return to India for some time afterwards, but instead lived in semi-retirement in Scotland with his sister, where Schuster recalls encountering them on more than one occasion". (*Mission with Mountbatten*, Alan Campbell—Johnson, Robert Hale, 1951, p. 33.) Sir Mirza Ismail, for many years Dewan of Mysore State, also held this view. "Mr. M. A. Jinnah," he wrote, "made no impression at the Round Table Conference. He was in agreement with no one, not even, in the end, with his own Muslim delegation. He insisted on ploughing the lonely furrow. He had his own views and obstinately stuck to them." (*My Public Life: Recollections and Reflections of Sir Mirza Ismail*, G. Allen & Unwin, 1954, p. 68.)

ment could weaken the forces of nationalism in the country. In seeking to promote communal concord, no one could have persevered more tenaciously than Gandhi did, but his labours were foredoomed to failure. In retrospect, one wonders what precisely he and the Congress were aiming at in the name of communal harmony. If it was their intention to enlist the co-operation of the Muslim League in their crusade against the Government by granting all that it demanded, they could never realise their objective since the policy-makers were always ready to concede more. As safeguards to the minorities, the August 1932 Award of Ramsay MacDonald ought to have satisfied the most suspicious and the most exacting among the communal leaders, but it did not. "We had," writes Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, "already secured our weightage and separate electorates under the Communal Award and after 1936 no demand by the Hindu community as such was made for its abrogation."¹⁰ To what end, then, were the many abortive "unity conferences" held? If they were directed towards ending the street affrays, they were equally futile because rioting was mostly provoked by political and religious fanatics, who could not be silenced by mere exhortations or pious resolutions.

Even assuming that Gandhi's efforts at communal peace had succeeded, they would certainly not have taken the country much closer to its political goal. The Muslim League, no matter what resolutions it adopted on the issue of national freedom, would never have abrogated its constitution and agreed to make common cause with the Congress in its civil disobedience movement. Nor would it have been to its advantage if it had done so. It would undoubtedly have forfeited the Government's support and patronage the moment it shed its communal character and descended into the arena of action to enforce the national demand. The fact that it enjoyed a good deal of preferential treatment is undoubted. To quote Lord Olivier again : "No one with any close acquaintance of Indian affairs will be prepared to deny that on the whole there is a predominant bias in British officialism in India in favour of the Moslem community." In the light of these facts, the persevering labours of Gandhi and the Congress on behalf of a vague and elusive goal

¹⁰ *Pathway to Pakistan*, Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, p. 178.

merely put a premium on the intransigence of the League, which saw to it that its demands were always beyond the reach of the nationalists for a settlement. Besides, the pre-occupation of the Congress with the communal question gave misleading publicity to the so-called disunity in the country and thereby furnished a plausible pretext to the imperialists to resist the national demand for independence.

The Congress was in fact under no necessity to go in quest of the nebulous "communal unity". Apart from the fact that there was always a sizeable number of Muslims in its ranks to fight its battles, its own strength was sufficient to clinch the issue of national freedom. There are few instances in history where an entire people had to rise in order to liberate themselves from foreign yoke. In America, for example, so little was the revolution the work of a convinced and united people that at no time in the war with the British did the army of Washington exceed twenty thousand men. The important thing in India was that at long last there had emerged an organisation, pledged to realise the national destiny by all peaceful and legitimate means and confident of its ultimate victory. So, if Gandhi's campaign of 1921-22 did not bring *swaraj* to the country at once, it certainly did not mean that the weapon wielded by him was ineffective. Nor did his arrest in March 1922, in consequence of his forthright writings, deflect the Indian history from the new course it had now taken. The ways of Gandhi, like his political technique, were unique. His abandonment of the Bardoli *satyagraha* in 1922, following mob violence at Chauri Chaura on February 4, when twenty-one policemen and watchmen lost their lives, while it perplexed and infuriated some of his followers, was fully in accord with his exacting standards. It was because he was so insistent on the peaceful character of his campaigns that they never became destructive or got seriously out of hand.

Gandhi and most of his followers were convinced that *swaraj* could be won only through mass action and not by entering the legislatures which contained no live embers that could be fanned into the flame of national freedom. Nevertheless, leaders like C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Hakim Ajmal Khan believed in capturing the Councils if only to check them from degenerating further into an instrument of oppression in the hands of

the authorities. The Viceroy's action in certifying the enhanced salt tax in the name of balancing the budget for 1923-24 in defiance of the decisive verdict of the Legislative Assembly against the increase, proved beyond doubt the emptiness of the Councils as the repositories of power. His step, to quote an official document, *India in 1923-24*, "was received with the utmost dismay by the majority of the Liberal party". The newly-formed Swaraj Party, therefore, decided to open a second front against the bureaucracy through the legislature. "The Party believes," declared the Swarajist election manifesto of October 1923, "that the guiding motive of the British in governing India is to serve the selfish interests of their own country, and the so-called Reforms are a mere blind to further the said interests, under the pretence of granting responsible government to India." The November elections gave the Swaraj Party a commanding position in the Assembly, of which it took full advantage by exposing the hollowness of both the reforms and the organs of government that operated under their auspices.

In February 1924, on the motion of the Leader of the Swaraj Party, Motilal Nehru, the Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution demanding the appointment of a committee to recommend a liberal constitution for India. What the country got, however, was a departmental enquiry, under the chairmanship of Sir Alexander Muddiman, into the working of the then existing system! During the debate, the Home Member, Sir Malcolm (later Lord) Hailey did some expert hairsplitting in an attempt to side-track the basic issue. He argued that responsible government was not necessarily incompatible with a legislature of limited or restricted powers. Dominion Status was, however, a different proposition because it represented a further and final step from responsible government. Such learned discourses were, however, wholly irrelevant since the Muddiman Committee could by no means assume the constitution-making powers of the British Parliament. At the most, it could recommend Dominion Status, which was equal to the status of Britain herself, but the majority Report did not envisage even responsible government. The minority on the Committee, led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, declared that dyarchy was unworkable, but Lord Olivier, the Labour Secretary of State for India, turned his

face resolutely against any major alteration in the constitution until after another investigation by a duly-constituted Commission.

The Swaraj Party thus drew a blank from its Council-entry programme, but the Assembly debates on national issues, often enlivened by powerful speeches, repartees, walkouts and Government defeats, helped to keep alive popular interest in the country's ultimate goal when the Congress was not actually engaged in the civil disobedience campaigns. With Vithalbhai Patel as President—an office which he held from August 1925 till his resignation in April 1930—the Assembly proceedings were never dull or commonplace. Unlike his famous brother, the serious-minded and somewhat grim-faced Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the President, who sported a venerable beard, was stout, shrewd and jovial and took to the robe and the wig like duck to water! Thanks to his sound legal knowledge, his extensive study of parliamentary practice, and his fearlessness, he became a thorn in the side of the bureaucracy. His stand on the President's jurisdiction over the watch and ward staff of the Legislative Assembly, his rebuke to the Commander-in-Chief, and his famous rulings on the Public Safety Bills, are instances of Patel's determination to safeguard the independence of the chair. Thus, the second front, though it did not bring victory to the cause of nationalism, certainly helped to reveal fully the emptiness of the so-called parliamentary institutions in India.

It also became evident that India had to work out her own destiny since she could expect little help from the British policy-makers in that direction. Apart from the fact that dyarchy as a system of government under the Act of 1919 had signally failed, it could by no means be regarded as the grammar of democracy. The Congress was always willing for an honourable compromise, although it had adopted complete independence as its goal through frustration. Motilal Nehru, who, in 1928 presided over the Committee of distinguished Indians that drafted the constitutional proposals, was prepared both then and later to consider any scheme that gave the substance of power to his people.¹⁰ The fairness of the Indian attitude was admitted by no less a person than Sir Samuel Hoare. Recalling Gandhi's gesture at

¹⁰ *The Tumult and the Shouting*: (The Memoirs of George Slocombe), Macmillan, 1936, pp. 365-66.

the Round Table Conference, he wrote: "I believe that if I had been able to say to him: 'Take Dominion Status at once without any safeguards', we should not only have found him one of our best friends, but he would immediately have offered us in return all the safeguards in the Government of India Bill and many more besides if anyone had wanted them." Then follow the fateful words: "Of course, I could not make any such offer."¹¹

It is remarkable that even in such a convulsive period, British statesmen were not prepared to abandon the obsession that loss of empire, and more especially of India, would cause the destruction of the physical and moral quality of their race. Had not Cecil Rhodes and Austen Chamberlain, for example, the pious prelates of imperialism, emphasized the importance of the Empire for Britain's survival?¹² Kitchener, who stubbed out his cigar in a gold ash-tray and fed biscuits to his poodle in India, felt deeply offended at being denied the Nobel Peace Prize. Explaining his resentment, this specialist in war and carnage claimed that he had brought peace to the Sudan, and subsequently to South Africa. "Nobel," he exclaimed, "is a dreamer. . . . How could such a man understand what our Empire means for the future of the whole of mankind?"¹³ Lord Balfour, like Lord Morley, employed picturesque language in order to "prove" India's unfitness for self-rule. Speaking in 1924, he considered it "perfect folly" to suppose that the fruits of parliamentary system could be passed on to India within any foreseeable future. "We are different," he said and claimed that institutions could not be imported "as you import a new locomotive" from one civilization into another.¹⁴

Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India from 1924-28, stated with disarming candour that India was an "incalculable asset to the mother country". His lordship did not, however, explain how Britain, some twenty times smaller than India and historically much younger, could qualify for the role of

¹¹ *Nine Troubled Years*, Lord Templewood (The Rt. Hon. Sir Samuel Hoare), Collins, 1954, p. 63.

¹² *Imperialism and Social Reform*, Bernard Semmel, G. Allen & Unwin, 1960, pp. 16, 25.

¹³ *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist*, Sir Philip Magnus, John Murray, 1958, p. 232.

¹⁴ *The Constitutional Problem in India*, Sir Reginald Coupland, Part I, Oxford, 1944, pp. 80, 81.

“mother”. India, he asserted, was not and would never be a “lost Dominion” until that moment, “if it ever comes, when the whole of the British Empire, with all that it means for civilization, is splintered in doom”. Besides, it was foolish to hurry up with reforms, for “wise men are not the slaves of dates, rather are dates the servants of sagacious men”.¹⁵ Birkenhead was a man of great foresight. He was anxious to avoid the risk that the nomination of the 1928 Statutory Commission on India should be in the hands of his successors. Writing in December 1925, he said: “You can readily imagine what kind of a Commission in its personnel would have been appointed by Colonel Wedgwood and his friends.” It was, therefore, elementary prudence to appoint such a body not later than the summer of 1927.

Birkenhead's choice fell on Sir John (later Lord) Simon to head the Commission which was appointed on November 26, 1927. A great lawyer, Simon was also a leading member of the Establishment. He set about his task with supreme confidence because his views on India coincided completely with those of the Secretary of State. Claiming that there was no essential difference between responsible government and Dominion Status—a point of view that was completely at variance with that of Sir Malcolm Hailey—the Chairman of the Commission illustrated his thesis thus: “If I go into my garden, the gardener may show me a green leaf peeping through the soil, which he will, no doubt truly, tell me is sun-flower. It is not indeed six feet tall, as it will be when fully grown: but it's not the less a sun-flower.” Simon was employing such flowery language in order to emphasize his faith in the so-called inevitability of gradualness. But, as Lord Halifax pointed out, he later reversed his attitude on both responsible government and Dominion Status, presumably under the influence of Lord Reading.¹⁶ Writing on January 1, 1929, Simon revealed his attitude to the Indian demand in these words: “I sometimes feel as though I had been asked to spend two years over a gigantic crossword puzzle, with the tip whispered into my private ear that the puzzle has

¹⁵ *Frederick Edwin Earl of Birkenhead: The First Phase* by his son the Earl of Birkenhead, Vol. I, 1933, pp. 247, 248.

¹⁶ *Fullness of Days*, The Earl of Halifax, Collins, 1957, pp. 117, 118.

no solution.”¹⁷ It was this man who was invited, with his colleagues, to pronounce his verdict on India!

Both the composition of the Commission and its terms of reference caused the deepest offence to India. It did not contain a single Indian as if its deliberations were of no concern at all to this country. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, who later recorded his regret at the exclusion of Indians, stated in November 1927 that what was required was a Commission which “would be unbiassed and competent to present an accurate picture of facts to Parliament”. In other words, it was to be a mere fact-finding body. But even assuming that a high-power Parliamentary Commission had little else to do, was the Chairman capable of presenting an “unbiassed” picture of India? Lord Birkenhead made the position brutally clear by declaring that the Commissioners were merely to play the role of intelligent jurymen.

The Commission paid two visits to India, the first lasting from February 3, 1928, to March 31, and the second from October 11, 1928, to April 13, 1929. On both those occasions, it was greeted with a forest of funereal banners inscribed “Simon go back” in every part of the country visited by it. The boycott was so complete that the Commission had little to report on except its own discomfiture. The humiliation of both the “jurymen” and the bureaucracy was so overwhelming that the police were allowed to run amuck and man-handle even the most respected leaders of the country. At Lahore, the ailing veteran leader of the Congress, Lala Lajpat Rai, was beaten on the chest on October 30, 1928, when leading a protest procession against the unwelcome visitors. He died on November 17,—a calamity that caused deep sorrow and anger to the Indian people.

Pandit Motilal Nehru, while speaking in the Legislative Assembly on February 15, 1929, on the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, recalled how his own son, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant had both come in for “concentrated attacks” by the Police at Lucknow. “I saw both of them,” he said, “and they appeared just as if a painter had painted them black and blue all over their bodies.”¹⁸ The labours of the Commission, which left behind such a trail of bitterness and resentment, were

¹⁷ *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin, 1926-1931*, S. Gopal, Oxford, 1957, p. 28.

¹⁸ *The Voice of Freedom: Selected Speeches of Pandit Motilal Nehru*, Edited by K. M. Panikkar and A. Pershad, Asia, 1961, p. 434.

treated with complete indifference by the British Government itself, necessitating Simon to make a pathetic plea to the King for assistance in salvaging his handiwork.¹⁹ And when his Report was published in May 1930, it merely became one more work in the "library of British political science".

While Simon and his men were deliberating on how best they could perform the miracle of reconciling Tory diehardism with the Indian demand, the brave peasants of Bardoli gave a memorable demonstration both to them and to the British Government that the destiny of India in fact lay in the hands of her own people. Led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and supported by Gandhi, they refused to pay the arbitrarily enhanced land revenue which was to be collected from February 1928. Despite the threat of the Governor of Bombay that the entire resources of the British Empire would be used to crush their no-tax campaign, their cause triumphed. By their exemplary courage and devotion to the principles of non-violence, the peasants of Bardoli became a model for similar action in the rest of the country.

The advent of the Labour Party to power in England in 1929 inspired the hope that the day of India's deliverance would not be far off. Authorised by the new Government, the Viceroy announced on October 31, 1929, that the "natural issue of India's constitutional progress" was "the attainment of Dominion Status". The jubilation of Indians at the announcement was, however, short-lived. Attacked by the Tories and disowned by his own Government, Irwin staged a complete *volte face* by repudiating the true import of his own statement. He solemnly told the Legislative Assembly in January 1930 that a mere announcement of the goal did not amount to reaching it! The fact that Labour was in power made no difference whatsoever to the issue of Indian freedom. It was indeed impossible to discount Lord Balfour's dictum that, whatever party was in office in England, the Conservatives were always in power.

The Congress did not, however, take the manoeuvre of the diehards lying down. At its annual session, held at Lahore in December 1929 under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, it opted for complete independence. January 26 was declared an "Independence Day", when thousands of Indians took

¹⁹ *King George The Fifth*, Harold Nicolson, Constable, 1952, pp. 504-505.

solemn pledges to liberate the country from British rule. Youngmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose wanted action to accompany the Congress resolutions but Gandhi refused to be hustled. After deep reflection for many months, he decided that the tax on salt, the poor man's food item, deserved to be defied and duly conveyed his plan of action to the Viceroy. On March 20, 1930, this astonishing man, now in his sixty-first year, began his historic march to Dandi, a seaside resort on the west coast, accompanied by seventy-eight members of his *ashram*. On the previous day, he had received a message from Rev. Dr. John Haynes Holmes of America, wishing him godspeed in his mission. Thousands of people greeted him *en route* with delirious enthusiasm, offering to make any sacrifice at his bidding. Gandhi reached the sea on April 5 and ceremonially broke the salt law. His example was followed by thousands of people all over the country. On May 4, he was arrested at night while sleeping in a tent a few miles away from the scene of his "crime".

The movement gathered great momentum and as many as 90,000 *satyagrahis* were seized and sent to prison. Irwin, described as a "Christian Viceroy", promulgated a plethora of ordinances to meet the situation and made his regime memorable for executive frightfulness. Police assaults on the non-co-operators attempting a raid on the Dharsana salt pans were noteworthy for their brutality. The fact that the demonstration was being led by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu had no effect at all on the behaviour of the police. "At times," wrote Webb Miller, an eye-witness, "the spectacle of unresisting men being methodically bashed into a bloody pulp sickened me so much that I had to turn away."²⁰ The Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, whose resilient political convictions carried a warning against imitating him, gave a categorical assurance to the Viceroy of his Government's full support in suppressing the unarmed revolt in India. On January 17, long before Gandhi had started on his "salt march", the Secretary of State, Wedgwood Benn, cabled Irwin: "If, as we both hope may not prove to be the case, you find it necessary to make use of extraordinary powers, I need not

²⁰ *I Found No Peace*, Webb Miller, 1937, pp. 183-184.

tell you I have every confidence in your judgment and will support you fully.”²¹

In spite of such brave words, the massive character of the rebellion thoroughly unnerved the authorities. A report of the Bombay Government called the Centre’s attention to the growing belief among the people that the British connection was “morally indefensible and politically intolerable”. The Viceroy in his turn informed the Secretary of State in June 1930 that “every European and Indian would tell you that he was surprised at the dimensions the movement has assumed. I certainly am myself—and we should delude ourselves if we sought to underrate it”. Military experts also viewed the situation with alarm and their fears were confirmed by the refusal of the Garhwali troops to open fire on an unarmed crowd at Peshawar. The shadows were thus steadily lengthening on an empire in which the sun had not set before. The salt satyagraha of 1930 bore two unforgettable lessons to England. It demonstrated that India was now strong enough to lift the foreign yoke from her shoulder and that Britain could not govern this country in defiance of Mahatma Gandhi.

While India was thus passing through widespread unrest, the First Round Table Conference was opened in London on November 12, 1930, with a fanfare of trumpets. The fifty-seven members of the British Indian delegation were the Viceroy’s nominees and, although not all these delegates were Shelley’s “illustrious obscure”, a good number of them had undoubtedly been chosen for their diehardism and antipathy to Indian nationalism. The absence of the Congress and Gandhi was conspicuous and in order to ensure their attendance at the second session, Ramsay MacDonald made a conciliatory speech on January 19, 1931, in which he held out hopes of making a substantial transfer of power to Indians. Prominent Congress leaders were accordingly released in the same month, which helped Gandhi to meet Irwin to discuss the outstanding differences between the Government and his organisation and to promote a peaceful atmosphere for the participation of the Congress in the London deliberations. While the peace negotiations

²¹ *Nehru: A Political Biography*, Michael Brecher, Oxford, 1959, p. 152.

were in progress, Motilal Nehru passed away on February 6, 1931, C. R. Das having died much earlier, in 1925.

The Gandhi-Irwin talks, made possible through the good offices of the Liberal leaders, Sapru and Jayakar, ended in the famous Pact of March 5, 1931. On specific issues, the Congress gained nothing from the agreement. Perhaps, its only welcome feature was that the Viceroy felt compelled to conclude it, thus conceding that the Mahatma was the real representative of the Indian people. It was this fact which drove Churchill to feel aghast at "the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir striding half-naked up to the steps of the Viceroy's Palace, there to negotiate and to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor". The Pact led to the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement and to the assent of Gandhi to attend the Second Round Table Conference.

Despite the Delhi Pact, Gandhi left for England on August 29 with great misgivings about his mission. Lord Willingdon, who had assumed the Viceroyalty of India in April in succession to Irwin, was evidently little disposed to countenance the Indian demand and fully shared the revulsion of his officials to the Pact. Gandhi was, however, determined to put the policy-makers' *bona fides* to a rigorous test. At the first Conference, Dr. Jayakar, who stood nearest to the absent Congress and knew its mind best, had eloquently pleaded for granting Dominion Status to his country. If this was done, he had said, "the cry of independence will die of itself". The second Conference, which began on September 7, had the great distinction of having Gandhi as a delegate and nothing would have been more graceful than to concede to India the same status that had been given to the Dominions. When the Indian question was under discussion, the Balfour formula, defining the relations of the Dominions with Britain, was being given statutory recognition through a Bill in the British Parliament, later to be called "the Statute of Westminster". The Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on November 12, 1931, and became law on December 11. The course of the Indo-British relations would have been different and the tragedy of India's partition could perhaps have been avoided if a similar gesture had been made to this country during Gandhi's presence in London. The Mahatma,

as Hoare has testified, would have accepted even less than Dominion Status if only he could see a change of heart among the members of the British governing class.

But from the outset there was a conspiracy among the diehards at the Conference to defeat the Mahatma's mission and to discredit him, if they could. Not only they, but many other members who knew that he alone held the key to the future political disposition of India, dreaded his presence in their midst. As the Secretary of State recorded, the Mahatma could see "at once through any veil that was intended to conceal anything from him". It was because he was so sagacious and so transparently sincere that he was unable to like MacDonald whose mischievous Communal Award drove Gandhi in September 1932 to jeopardise his life in order to secure its modification.²² Far from addressing itself to the basic issues, the Conference degenerated into an arena of competing claims, put forward by the communalists and the champions of vested interests. Gandhi refused to have anything to do with what he called the business of "dissecting the carcass".²³

²² Hugh Dalton says: "His (MacDonald's) most contemptuous opponent, Winston Churchill, called him 'the boneless wonder'; he was not so much a boneless as a hollow man." *Call Back Yesterday: Memoirs 1887-1931*, Hugh Dalton, Frederick Muller, 1953, p. 187. H. G. Wells wrote about the British Prime Minister: "That queer, vain simulacrum of a statesman." Dalton, who added his own bouquet to MacDonald in his next book, accused the unfortunate man of "senile vanity". In 1935, MacDonald was greeted in Parliament with the interruption: "Sit down, man, sit down! You are a ghastly tragedy!" *The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-35*, Hugh Dalton, 1957, p. 86.)

²³ George V shared the Establishment's dislike for Mahatma Gandhi who was seen, not as a great patriot, but as the ring-leader *par excellence* of political delinquents. At the tea party given to the Indian delegates to the R.T.C. in the Buckingham Palace, His Majesty suddenly flared up at Gandhi and said: "You organised demonstrations against my son, against my own son. Such disloyal activities and insults to the members of the royal family will not be tolerated. My Government's officers are being murdered in open daylight. No such rebellious activities will be permitted. . . ." (Gandhi's encounter with the King has been described at length in the *Bhavan's Journal*, Bombay, for September 30, 1962, by an Indian journalist who covered the Mahatma's visit to London.) Sir Samuel Hoare, who was present on the occasion, was surprised at the King's outburst and feared an unpleasant scene. But, he writes, Gandhi's *savoir faire* saved the situation. "I must not," replied the Mahatma, "be drawn into a political argument in your Majesty's Palace after receiving your Majesty's hospitality." Commenting on his dignified and generous behaviour, Hoare exclaims: "What exquisite worldly manners the unworldly possess!" (*Nine Troubled Years*, pp. 55-60.) Of King George V, his biographer, Harold Nicolson, writes that he "was not by temperament an equable man" and that "he possessed few internal resources" (*King George The Fifth*, Harold Nicolson, Constable, 1952, p. 433). George VI was also not a friend of Indian freedom.

The Conference failed, but Gandhi did not. Intrigues, manoeuvres and subterfuges could not defeat him or his cause. Every day of his stay in England brought to the British people a better understanding of his stature, not only as a great national leader, but also as a true friend of mankind. Young and old, rich and poor, and the humble and the exalted, were all irresistibly drawn towards him. Asked to give his impressions of Gandhi whom he met, Bernard Shaw reacted in his typical Shavian manner: "Impression of Gandhi! you might as well ask one to give one's impression of the Himalayas." Madame Montessori, who gave him a great reception, declared: "He has been in my thoughts for many years. I have followed him with my soul." He spent three hours with Lloyd George in intimate conversation with him at Churt and went on a "pilgrimage" to C. P. Scott, the doyen of British journalism, who told him that if Gladstone had been alive and if he had been Prime Minister, he would assuredly have given freedom to India after seeing Gandhi's moral and spiritual splendour. (*Bhavan's Journal*: Annual Number, 1962, pp. 117-19.) It was typical of Gandhi that he did not forget to call on Colonel Maddock at his residence near Reading to renew his expressions of gratitude to the surgeon for saving his life in January 1924 at Poona by his timely operation for acute appendicitis. His return journey to India was equally eventful. In December 1931, he met the famous scholar and thinker, Romain Rolland, at Villeneuve in Switzerland and held intimate discussions with him for many days.

Mahatma Gandhi, who had sailed for England from Bombay on August 29, 1931, returned to the city on December 28. During this period, Willingdon and his men had done everything in their power to drive the country to the brink of another rebellion. Bengal, the North-West Frontier Province, the United Provinces and many other parts of the country were seething with unrest and resentment at the unprovoked official repression. The Viceroy was determined to break the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and to destroy the Congress. He filled the statute book with a multitude of arbitrary regulations, forcing even Hoare to admit in the House of Commons that "the Ordinances that we have approved are very drastic and severe. They cover almost every activity of Indian life". Willingdon refused to

see Gandhi and, before the Congress had time to organise resistance to the Government's tyrannical measures, all its prominent leaders, including the Mahatma, were swept into India's numerous prisons. Not less than 80,000 persons were imprisoned in the first four months of 1932. The evil of MacDonald's Communal Award, which gave separate representation to the Depressed Classes, was somewhat mitigated by the Poona Pact of September 1932 which, thanks to Gandhi's fast, saved the Hindu community from dismemberment.

While India's representative leaders were languishing in prison, the London deliberations proceeded on their sterile course. The Third and last Round Table Conference, a thoroughly attenuated affair, assembled on November 17, 1932, with only forty-six delegates, who did little else beyond reiterating their hackneyed views on the same old subjects like safeguards and the eligibility of Indians to administer their own affairs. The British Government drew up its decisions in the light of the discussions and recommendations made at the three Conferences and published them in a White Paper in March 1933. There was, however, nothing "white" about those decisions which were further stiffened by a "powerful" parliamentary committee which, like the ill-fated Simon Commission, was an exclusive body. The Joint Parliamentary Committee functioned indefatigably under the chairmanship of Lord Linlithgow who later made desperate attempts to salvage the Act of 1935 during his Indian Viceroyalty. The Committee laboured for eighteen months, held 159 meetings and examined 120 witnesses, the star performer in this strange drama being one of the Committee's own members—Sir Samuel Hoare! He was examined for nineteen days and answered more than 7,000 questions. A Bill, churned out of the White Paper and the J.P.C. Report, was introduced in Parliament in December 1934, and, amidst a good deal of diehard doubts, won Royal assent on August 4, 1935.

What are the salient features of this monumental document and to what extent did it seek to fulfil the British Government's solemn pledges to India, namely, that the "natural issue of India's constitutional progress is the attainment of Dominion Status"? Despite this categorical assurance and the remonstrances of men like Clement Attlee during the debate on Indian

reforms, there was no reference at all to Dominion Status in the Act of 1935. What emerged was in fact a strange, complex and confusing constitutional instrument, the like of which is unknown to students of history. It would be untrue to claim for it that it contained the germs of a dominion constitution because the "safeguards" in which it abounded, had no parallel in the dominions. The Montford Reforms, as we saw, gave the Indian ministers portfolios without power and positions without substance. The Act of 1935 continued this tradition faithfully.

The Act provided for the separation of Burma from India and for the creation of Sind and Orissa into new provinces, while the North-West Frontier Province was raised to the status enjoyed by the older ones. Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar and Assam were to have a bicameral legislature, the rest being given single Chambers. There was a cautious enlargement of the franchise, with the property qualifications remaining intact. Some 30 million were given the right to vote under the new dispensation. All the objectionable features of communal representation were reproduced in the Act, thus seriously compromising the essence of responsible government. As before, the Governor was clothed with a plenitude of arbitrary powers and the fact that dyarchy was abolished did not in any way improve the position or the effectiveness of the council of ministers, by whom he was to be assisted in the administration of his province. The Instrument of Instructions, given to the Governors and the Governor-General, was accorded the same statutory sanctity as the constitution itself so that these dignitaries had two sets of sanctions for nullifying any assertion of popular will in the country's administration. In relation to them, the popularly-elected ministers were precisely in the same position as a parenthetical clause in a sentence.

The Governor, who was to act in his discretion in certain matters and to exercise his individual judgment in others, was given special responsibilities on seven subjects, which included the "safeguarding of the legitimate rights of minorities" and the "protection of the rights of any Indian State and the rights and dignity of the Ruler thereof". The security of the province was also his responsibility and in order to ensure it, he was to exercise his individual judgment in the formulation of police rules and in the administration of the secret service and the

intelligence departments. He was empowered to give his assent to a bill or withhold it or reserve it for the consideration of the Governor-General. He was also clothed with powers to issue ordinances both during the session of the legislature and when it was not in session, and to function as a super law-making authority. He could enact a "Governor's Act" if he considered that such a measure was necessary in the discharge of his functions. He could in fact brush aside the entire constitutional structure and assume the direct administration of the province if he was "satisfied" that "a situation has arisen in which the government of the Province cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Act" (Section 93).

His power over the purse was equally absolute. While it was open to the members of the legislature to criticise and to condemn the debt charges, they would not be entitled to vote on them. Even the minor privilege of discussion was denied in the case of the Governor's salary and the expenditure on his establishment. It would, therefore, require great courage to call a constitution democratic, which arms the head of the state, appointed by a distant authority and in no way answerable to the people, with a multitude of extraordinary powers and relegates the ministers to the position of subordinates.

Far more serious objections could be levied against the proposed federal government. The Centre was to consist of an upper and a lower house, the former to be termed the Council of State and the latter the House of Assembly. The strength of the Council of State was to be 156 members from British India and 104 from the States. The Federal Assembly was to consist of 250 representatives from British India and 125 members from the States. The Governor-General, who headed the State, was invested with all the extraordinary powers given to the Governors and much more, as they had to be commensurate with his responsibility to keep India safe for the Empire.

The federal structure gave the arbiters of India's destiny, not one trump card, but many. The scheme to associate the autocrats of the States and their nominees with the all-India administration ensured the ascendancy of the British power in the country. When the provincial part of the Act came into operation on April 1, 1937, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, showed desperate anxiety to hasten the accession of princely India to

the federation. With a representation equal to one-third of the total in the Lower House and to two-fifths in the Upper House, the States' representatives comprised a bloc which, "if the Princely Order are wise, and hold together, no political party can possibly afford to ignore".²⁴

It was indeed fantastic to provide for bringing under a single system such widely differing and disparate units as the princely States and the British Indian provinces. Since the representatives of the former were to be the nominees of the rulers, the federal legislature was to be a strange amalgam of popularly-elected members and the henchmen of the autocrats. It was unthinkable that the men from princely India could be allowed to thrust their oars into the affairs of the whole country when they did not represent even their own people. Again, the accession of the States to the federation was not to be as complete as that of the provinces, since the princes were given an option to include in their Instruments of Accession only those subjects in respect of which alone they were willing to accede. In all other respects, the *status quo* was to be maintained in the States with the Governor-General continuing to exercise his paramountcy rights over them, but under the new designation of Crown Representative. Commenting on the attempted marriage of incompatibles, represented by the benighted princely India and the British Indian provinces, the latter being essentially subordinate divisions of a unitary State, Professor Keith observed that the scheme was favoured with the object of providing "an element of pure conservatism in order to combat any dangerous elements of democracy contributed by British India".²⁵

The discredited system of dyarchy, abolished in the provinces, was specially imported into the Centre. The Governor-General was furnished with a frightening armoury of special powers. He could promulgate ordinances, make his own enactments, and

²⁴ *Speeches and Statements by the Marquess of Linlithgow* (1936-43), Government of India, 1945, pp. 196-97. The constitution-makers, however, betrayed a fatal lapse in their prescience when they provided in the Act that there would be no all-India federation unless 52 out of 104 seats allotted to the States in the Upper House of the federal legislature and accounting for half the total population of the States, were filled. The Second World War intervened before the vacillating princess could make up their minds so that the darling of Linlithgow and of others died still-born, much to their grief and consternation.

²⁵ *A Constitutional History of India*, Professor A. B. Keith, Methuen, 1936, pp. 474-75.

suspend the constitution. He was also required to exercise absolute control over considerable portions of federal finances. In these and in many other matters, his ministers were merely to watch and nod their heads. Defence and foreign affairs, the most fundamental attributes of sovereignty, were placed beyond the pale of popular control. The long-established preferential treatment enjoyed by British commerce in India was sought to be safeguarded through a provision in the Act, despite the warning of discerning experts against any such measure. Ample statutory protection was extended to members of the Civil Service, thereby giving one more proof of the constitution-makers' lack of faith in the ability or the *bona fides* of Indians to administer their own affairs wisely and impartially.

Such was the Act of 1935. It was in fact an eloquent essay in the *status quo*. India was treated like a vast mansion, in which the minorities, the princes, foreign vested interests, and a powerfully entrenched bureaucracy were encouraged to find a hospitable home despite the admonitions of fair-minded constitutional authorities like Keith, who, as far back as 1934, had written that "a policy of surrender of authority in British India" would be most desirable as it was inescapable.²⁶ But the seductions of imperial glory that blinded the vision of the constitution-makers, made any such wise course of action impossible. On the contrary, men like Amery considered the Act "a remarkable feat of constructive statesmanship"! In spite of the fact that it contained a good number of hand-picked men, the Indian legislature rejected the scheme as being inadequate and reactionary. The Congress was firmly against it and Mahatma Gandhi delivered the death-blow to the Act by saying that he had not read it at all. The policy of the Congress, he wrote on March 30, 1937, was "not to secure an amendment but an absolute ending of the constitution which nobody likes".

The Congress, therefore, fought the elections and accepted the responsibilities of government in the provinces in 1937 in order to bend the constitution to its will or to break it. This point was made clear by Nehru who declared: "Acceptance of office does not mean by an iota acceptance of the slave constitution. It means fight against the coming of federation by all

²⁶ *Letters on Imperial Relations, Indian Reform, Constitutional and International Law*, A. B. Keith, Oxford, 1935, p. 233.

means in our power, inside as well as outside the legislatures.”²⁷ The manner in which the Congress ministries functioned did not, however, give any indication that such a conflict was impending. But the war, besides unsettling many things, helped decisively in sending the Act of 1935 to its doom. It also took the issue of India's freedom out of the hands of the British Government. Gandhi's dream of national independence was soon to come true.

²⁷ *Mahatma (Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi)*, D. G. Tendulkar, Vol. IV, The Times of India Press, 1952, p. 186.

11. INDIA WINS FREEDOM

LORD LINLITHGOW was the Viceroy of India when the Second World War broke out in September 1939. Much was claimed on behalf of the war. Ramsay Muir, for instance, described it as the "noblest and the most idealistic war that has ever been fought", while Amery, forgetting his own record, held that if Hitler won, it would mean "the end of *magna carta* and all that it has stood for". World thinkers and writers, like Bertrand Russell and H. G. Wells, looked upon the war as a crisis of civilization and drew up blue-prints for a bold reorganisation of human affairs on a just and equitable basis. Some of them asked for action towards that end, even when the cannons were roaring, for, as Harold Laski maintained, "in war, the deed is the word".

In India, the enthusiasm of the nationalists for the Allied cause was unmistakable. After meeting the Viceroy on September 5, Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "As I was picturing before him the Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction, I broke down." Nehru's preference for the Western Democracies was equally pronounced. "In a conflict," he declared, "between democracy and freedom on the one side and Fascism and aggression on the other, our sympathies must inevitably lie on the side of democracy." He, therefore, desired that his motherland should be given every opportunity "to play her full part and throw all her resources into the struggle for a new order".

Unfortunately, there was no helpful response from the British Government to this gesture. The Viceroy took India for granted. Brushing aside the morality of committing an alien and distant country to the tribulations of a total war, he precipitately ranged India on the side of Britain without caring to explain the implications of his action. What he did was constitutionally correct, but it patently conflicted with the policy-makers' repeated declarations about her impending political status. The fact that popular ministries were functioning in all the eleven provinces

at the time, made no difference whatsoever to Linlithgow's arbitrariness. No such liberty was taken by the British Government with the Dominions, while Eire, so close to Britain, chose to remain neutral. India, the Crown jewel, could, however, claim no such privilege.

It is useless to speculate on events that have not occurred, but there is good reason to believe that the partition of India and the terrible holocaust that accompanied it could have been avoided if, soon after the outbreak of the war, the British Government had shown a genuine desire to meet the Indian demand. An invitation to responsible leaders, drawn from all the principal parties in the country, and not merely to reactionaries and titled non-entities, to join the Viceroy's Executive Council, reinforced by a categorical assurance that the extraordinary powers of the Governor-General would not be exercised with impunity, would have stimulated a tremendous co-operative enthusiasm in the country. An unambiguous pronouncement from Whitehall that India would be given Dominion Status soon after the war would have further galvanized the country. Jinnah, who had still no idea of his impending destiny, would in all probability have readily accepted such a dispensation.

But no such statesmanlike action was taken by the British Government. The argument that the exigencies of the war forbade any radical changes in the Act of 1935 was invalid. Apart from the fact that in war, to repeat Laski's observation, the deed is the word, Churchill and his War Cabinet enjoyed a plenitude of powers, with which even the dictators were not clothed. Nothing could have prevented the British Government from putting India firmly on the road to freedom if it had only decided to do so. Within one month of his assumption of the Prime Ministership in May 1940, Churchill made the epoch-making offer of a union with France. Such a revolutionary gesture was made during "the most fateful moment in the history of the modern world". The simple act of loosening the nuts and bolts on the Indian constitutional structure would certainly not have demanded any such startling innovations.

The Viceroy made no attempts at all to win over the Congress to his cause. On the contrary, he renewed the discredited Round Table Conference method of inviting the representatives of every opposing interest to offer their views on the country's

future. The Congress protested and demanded a categorical statement of British war and peace aims in relation to this country. Linlithgow's reactions were on familiar lines. On October 17, 1939, he declared that, when peace returned His Majesty's Government would be "very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of several communities, parties, and interests in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as may seem desirable" to the Act of 1935. The pathological attachment of the policy-makers to the universally detested statute was truly remarkable. The Congress became furious at their evasive tactics and in protest withdrew its ministries from the provinces in October-November 1939.

Linlithgow's much-advertised announcement of August 8, 1940, was equally sterile. Promising that, after the conclusion of the hostilities, a constitution-making body would be brought into existence in India in order to frame a new constitution, he hastened to reassure the diehards both at home and in this country that nothing startling was really intended to be done. "It goes without saying," declared the August 1940 policy statement, "that they (the British Government) could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor can they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a Government."

As an incitement to the reactionary and communal elements to claim a veto on the country's political progress, it was impossible to think of a more effective document than the August declaration. The Congress, which had by now stripped itself of all ministerial responsibilities, took the fateful decision of wandering in the wilderness by launching what was called selective civil disobedience,—a form of protest that took care not to embarrass the war effort in the country. At Gandhi's instance, Vinoba Bhave, the future Bhudan leader, courted arrest. Nehru did likewise and, at the end of October 1940, was sentenced to an aggregate term of four years' rigorous imprisonment. Many other leaders, destined to pilot the affairs of free India a few years later, were swept into prison at the most critical period in the history of their country. While the war

was being waged in the name of democracy and for the rights of man, in India there was the strange spectacle of government by officials. With the legislatures suspended, the common people were "exposed to the tender mercies of incompetent, and not unoften corrupt, officials unhampered by any fear of exposure at the hands of representative men able to function in a privileged form to exert constitutional pressure on those in power".¹

The worsening situation in India was watched with growing disquiet in America and elsewhere. During his overseas visit, Wendell L. Willkie, Republican candidate for American Presidency in 1940, had noticed that from Cairo on the Indian question confronted him at every turn. On May 5, 1941, A. A. Berle, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, expressed the view in his draft *Aide Memoire* that the status of India was of crucial importance since "the degree to which and the methods by which she becomes integrated into a common co-operative effort of free peoples undeniably will affect the attitude of the Middle East countries".²

Japan's sudden attack on Pearl Harbour and her spectacular victories in the Far East, leading to the surrender of Singapore on February 15, 1942, vastly increased the American pressure on the British Government on the Indian question. Churchill, who, on his assumption of office, had proclaimed his determination not to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire, was forced to do precisely the thing he so heartily detested. The fall of Singapore, he admitted, was "the greatest disaster to British arms". The war was taking a heavy toll of human lives and of the Empire's resources. Robert Sherwood recorded that England's balances, which had amounted to four and a half billion dollars before the war, "were gone, including the holdings in America of British individuals which had been appropriated by His Majesty's Government and liquidated".³ A bankrupt Empire could not be a desirable heritage.

¹ *Constitutional Proposals of the Sapru Committee*: Report compiled by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. M. R. Jayakar, Sir N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar and Kunwar Sir Jagdish Prasad, December 1945, pp. 38-39.

² *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1941, Vol. III, p. 177.

³ *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, Robert E. Sherwood (Bantam Books), Vol. I, 1950, pp. 270-71.

Churchill, who had to lean heavily on American aid to win the war, could not summarily reject the U.S. statesmen's counsel on Indian affairs. The formidable Cordell Hull, the U.S. Secretary of State, missed no opportunity of telling the British leaders how important it was to meet Indian political aspirations. He advised Halifax, the British ambassador in the United States, that India should not be excluded from the Atlantic Charter since any such omission would be invidious.⁴ At his many meetings with Churchill, President Roosevelt impressed upon the British Prime Minister that American opinion felt strongly on the Indian question. In his message of February 25, 1942, to John G. Winant, U.S. Ambassador in Britain, the President expressed concern over the Indian situation, "especially in view of the possibility of the necessity of a slow retirement through Burma into India itself". He had been told that the British defence would not have "sufficiently enthusiastic support from the people of India themselves".

Marshal Chiang Kai-shek, who visited India in the same month, made an open appeal to the British Government to liberate the country "as the wisest policy". Commending his appeal to the notice of Roosevelt, he requested the President to reinforce it by telling Churchill how deeply he, the Marshal, was shocked at the Indian military and political situation. He, therefore, urged that unless the Indian nettle was grasped "immediately and urgently the danger will be daily increasing".⁵ Forced to respond to such influential pressure, the British Prime Minister sent Sir Stafford Cripps, the Lord Privy Seal, to India with proposals for a political settlement.

The situation in India was none too promising when Cripps arrived in the country on March 22, 1942. By its uncompromising insistence on national freedom, the Congress had by now thoroughly antagonised the bureaucracy which assiduously laboured to raise the Muslim League and its leader to the pinnacle of negative power. The fact that the League had signally failed to form a ministry in its own right even in a single province after the 1936-37 elections made no difference whatsoever to the Government's policy of placating it. It is true that the

⁴ *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. II, Hodder & Stoughton, 1948, p. 1485.

⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1942, Vol. I, pp. 604-05.

Premiers of the Punjab and Bengal, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan and A. K. Fazl-ul-Huq, had joined the League in October 1937, but that fact did not in the least affect their provincial affiliations. Sir Sikander, who led the non-communal National Unionist Party, abhorred the separatist politics of the League. "His own dislike of Pakistan," says Penderel Moon, a British officer of the Indian Civil Service, "or *Jinnistan*, as he irreverently called it, was well known."⁶ The death of Sikander Hyat Khan at the end of 1942 was unfortunate, but his place in the Punjab Cabinet was taken by Sir Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana. He was a much stronger man than his predecessor and was determined not to "bow to Jinnah's dictation".

Despite his frequent unbalanced utterances, Fazl-ul-Huq remained firmly in Bengal's ministerial saddle from 1937 to 1943, hurling defiance at all, including the future *Quaid-i-Azam*. He caused complete discomfiture to the League by claiming that his ministry was a real Hindu-Muslim coalition, "giving the rest of India an example of inter-communal co-operation at a critical time".⁷ The slippery politics of Sind gave no firm foothold to any party in the province, Jinnah's persevering labours to annex it to his own organisation proving totally ineffective. Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh, a pro-Congress leader, held control over the Sind ministry during Cripps' visit to this country. The Congress reigned supreme in the North-West Frontier Province under the leadership of the Khan brothers. The name of the League, says Professor Coupland, "was unknown on the Frontier not many years ago".⁸ Besides the Congress Muslims, there were other organisations like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Ahrars, and the All-India Shia Political Conference which wielded considerable influence among the Muslims, but they were all cold-shouldered by the Government since they refused to toe the official line.

The change in Jinnah's position and outlook after the outbreak of the war was remarkable. Shrewdly anticipating that the British Government could no longer do without him or his party, he peremptorily dismissed all overtures from the Congress for making a united national demand on the British rulers and

⁶ *Divide and Quit*, Penderel Moon, Chatto and Windus, 1961, p. 21.

⁷ *The Constitutional Problem in India*, Sir Reginald Coupland, Part II, Oxford, 1944, p. 30.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

exhorted his followers to celebrate the resignation of Congress ministries as a "Deliverance Day" on December 22, 1939. In the correspondence that passed between him and the Viceroy, he won a resounding victory for his cause by firmly committing the British Government to India's partition. Writing to Linlithgow on February 23, 1940, he promised to lend his wholehearted support to the Government in the prosecution of the war, and asked in return that the future disposition of the country should not be undertaken without "our approval and consent". His demand was fully met so that on March 23, 1940, he caused his party, which met at Lahore, to adopt the famous "Pakistan Resolution". It was a vague but formidable demand and its fulfilment, as Sir Sikander Hyat Khan predicted, "would mean a massacre".

On July 1, Jinnah submitted his "tentative proposals" to the Government in all their amplitude and declared with stern finality that the "fundamental principles" embodied in the Lahore Resolution had now "become the universal faith of Muslim India". He admonished the Viceroy to repose unlimited trust in "Muslim leadership" in the larger interests of war effort by conceding parity of representation to the League in all interim arrangements in which the Congress participated or a majority if the Congress did not. The long-term settlement should, of course, be on the basis of the country's division. The great champion of "justice" for Muslims was thus demanding that a minority should be given the right to govern the rest of the population!⁹ The Viceroy was, of course, most responsive and, although he did not concede the League's claim to be recognised as the only spokesman of "Muslim India", he assured its leader that he should be under no apprehension that "any suggestions you may put forward would not receive full consideration".

In an unusually candid statement about the sudden rise of his star, Jinnah said in 1940 thus: "Upto the time of the declaration of war, the Viceroy never thought of me but of Gandhi and Gandhi alone. I have been the leader of an important party in the Legislature for a considerable time, larger than the one I have the honour to lead at present, the Muslim League party in the Central Legislature. Yet the Viceroy never thought of me before." The new development was further elucidated by

⁹ *Speeches and Statements by the Marquess of Linlithgow* (1936-43), p. 405.

Professor Edward Thompson who said: "The Moslem League has gained in the same fashion as Congress, since it became the Government practice to treat its President, Mr. Jinnah, as a kind of Moslem Mahatma."¹⁰ It was clear to all who could see that the scales were being continually weighted against the nationalists. In an effort to end the stalemate in the country, Indian leaders attached to no political party met in Bombay in March 1941 under the presidentship of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and made some moderate proposals towards that end. But the Secretary of State, Amery, summarily rejected them on the ground that Jinnah had repudiated them! Rightly did Sapru deplore the British policy of mortgaging the future of a great country to "intractable leadership". Confronted by Winant, the U.S. ambassador, with the straight question whether it was not the British who were really responsible for fostering the opposition of the Congress to the Raj, Amery admitted with great reluctance that it was so.¹¹

This was the situation that faced Cripps when he came to India. He was a good friend of the nationalists and had suggested to Nehru in October 1939 that the Congress should "stand as firm as a rock upon its demands". He had reiterated this view in December after visiting this country and had held that the political deadlock could be broken only if the Viceroy started real negotiations on the basis of a "firm British offer on generous terms".¹² Who could imagine that a man of such a generous disposition would become Churchill's emissary in order to sell an intrinsically unsound scheme to the Indian people?

The Draft Declaration, published on March 30, 1942, envisaged self-government for India soon after the war. The future Indian Union would consist of provinces and princely States. The former would be free not to join the Union, but they could always have second thoughts and enter later. Amery's disruptive dictum, namely, that "India's future house of freedom has room for many mansions" thus became an inflexible British policy towards this country. Similar option was

¹⁰ *Enlist India for Freedom!* Edward Thompson, Gollancz, 1940, p. 23.

¹¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1942, Vol. I, p. 701.

¹² *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps*, Colin Cooke, Hodder & Stoughton, 1957, p. 256.

given to the multitudinous principalities on the issue of their accession to the Union. They were, however, required to negotiate a revision of their treaty arrangements in order to meet the "new situation". It was incumbent upon the constitution-making body envisaged under the scheme, to give an undertaking to the British Government that the interests of the "racial and religious minorities" would be duly protected. How any Government that made such a commitment to an outside authority could claim to possess untrammelled sovereignty was an issue to which no convincing reply could be found. The millstone of "minorities" was to be tied eternally round India's neck.

All this was about the future, but it was the present that mattered most. On that account, all that India received from the document was a sanctimonious homily that her people should participate effectively in the "counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations". The Cripps offer thus really meant nothing and unless it was infused with flesh, blood and life through discussion and negotiation with the Indian leaders, there was no hope that the Lord Privy Seal's mission would succeed.

The Congress asked for nothing more startling than the acceptance of proposals which bore a striking resemblance to the scheme that had been put forward by the Non-Party Conference in March 1941. It demanded that the Viceroy's Executive Council should be thoroughly reorganised and Indianized and be allowed to function as a full-fledged Cabinet, with the Governor-General strictly playing the role of constitutional head. The Defence portfolio should also be held by an Indian, although the Commander-in-Chief would have unfettered freedom to prosecute the war according to his own expert reading of the situation.

Counselled by Colonel Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's personal representative in India, Cripps was at first inclined to close in with the Congress counter-offer, but the real arbiters of India's destiny decided otherwise. "Churchill," wrote Harry Hopkins, "is the British War Cabinet, and no one else matters." It was impossible that this high priest of imperialism would readily agree to release India from Britain's apron-strings. Colonel Johnson's message to the U.S. Secretary of State on April

11, 1942, throws much useful light on the Cripps fiasco, besides exposing the absurdity of blaming Mahatma Gandhi for it. "Cripps," wrote Johnson, "is sincere, knows this matter should be solved. He and Nehru could solve it in five minutes if Cripps had any freedom or authority. To my amazement when satisfactory solution seemed certain, with unimportant concession, Cripps with embarrassment told me that he could not change original draft declaration without Churchill's approval and that Churchill had cabled him that he will give no approval unless Wavell and Viceroy separately send their own code cables unqualifiedly endorsing any change Cripps wants."¹³

It was absurd to expect the Congress to accept an offer which, as Johnson so aptly put it, "contained little more than the unkept promise of the First World War". Rejecting the British proposals, the Congress President, Maulana Azad, wrote to Cripps on April 11, 1942, saying that the British Government attached "more importance to holding on to its rule in India as long as it can and promoting discord and disruption than to an effective defence of India".

Nationalist India was convinced that if the British rulers were not prepared to trust her people to defend their hearths and homes and their lives and honour even in the hour of their peril, it was futile to expect any transfer of power to them in normal times. The Congress executive's "Quit India" resolution, adopted in Bombay on August 8, 1942, was, therefore, the natural reaction of a deeply disappointed people. Many prominent leaders, including Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Pandit Pant, Asaf Ali, Acharya Kripalani and Dr. Syed Mahmud, were arrested and interned at the Ahmednagar fort, while Mahatma Gandhi was detained in Poona. The mass movement that followed these provocative arrests gathered formidable strength and was brought under control only after employing what Gandhi called leonine violence.

In an attempt to focus world attention on the disastrous happenings in India, the seventy-three-year old Mahatma went on a fast for twenty-one days from February 10, 1943. It was widely believed that he would not be able to survive the ordeal. His English disciple, Miss Slade, known in India as Mira Behn,

¹³ *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1942, Vol. I, p. 631.*

recorded that the authorities "had gone so far as to collect the sandal and other wood for the cremation". But, she added, "God spared India the sorrow and England the shame". Gandhi's spirit triumphed over the flesh and he emerged unscathed from the hazards of foodless weeks. A powerful barrage of propaganda was unleashed against him by insinuating that he was pro-Japanese. Gandhi, the man who moulded millions of Indians into patriots, certainly deserved to be taught the virtues of patriotism by the agents of imperialism!

Linlithgow, who had held India in fee for more than seven years, laid down his office in October 1943. His regime was noteworthy for many disastrous landmarks. He was eminently successful in fomenting dissensions and discord in India on a scale unknown in the country's history. So pre-occupied was he with war effort and political machinations that there was little time for him to grapple with the appalling Bengal famine which, together with pestilence, claimed 1,500,000 human lives. The provincial Government, under the premiership of the Muslim League leader, Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin, was equally indifferent and inept. The League Ministry was in fact much too engrossed with power politics to be able to give any thought to human suffering. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru has inscribed a suitable epitaph on Linlithgow's Indian viceroyalty. He says: "Today, I say, after seven years of Lord Linlithgow's administration, the country is more divided than it was when he came here." Linlithgow was succeeded by Lord Wavell, a defeated General, whose appointment to the Indian viceroyalty astonished even men like Amery.

Wavell, who promptly discarded his military uniform, set at rest many apprehensions about himself both by speech and action. He showed exceptional keenness and efficiency in dealing with the Bengal famine. He was convinced about India's pivotal position in world affairs and about the need to fulfil the aspirations of her people. It seemed to him that the basic principle of his task, as he later wrote to King George VI, was "the vital necessity, not only to the British Commonwealth but to the whole world, of a united, stable and friendly India". As an essential step in that direction, he proposed to release Gandhi and Nehru from prison and thus pave the way for a *rapprochement* with the nationals. But this suggestion "received no sup-

port at all from London and made King George very angry".¹⁴ Wavell's official advisers on the spot were no less opposed to any such gesture.

Gandhi, whose overtures to the new Viceroy thus proved abortive, searched for another means of finding a solution to the Indian problem. He had been released unconditionally on May 6, 1944, on medical grounds. In September, he entered into long drawn out, but utterly futile, discussions with Jinnah on the future disposition of the country. He vainly pleaded with the League leader to accept C. Rajagopalachari's formula as the basis for negotiations. Jinnah, to whom any precise definition of his goal was extremely inconvenient, preferred the picture of Pakistan to conform to the fantasy of Choudhry Rahmat Ali, a Punjabi lawyer, and to the poetic effusions of Sir Muhammed Iqbal, the "Poet of Islam". It was indeed impossible to find any common ground between the two, the one irrepressibly impatient of his country's thralldom and the other coolly biding his own time and steadily building up his personal prestige. Many competent observers have expressed the view that the September talks were entirely misconceived. It was wrong on Gandhi's part to wait upon Jinnah and to address him in almost obsequious terms. "I think," wrote Maulana Azad, "Gandhiji's approach to Jinnah at this time was a great blunder. It gave a new and added importance to Mr. Jinnah which he later exploited to the full."¹⁵ The virtual exile of the Congress between the years 1942 and 1945 gave a tremendous fillip to the growth of the Muslim League which now enhanced its membership to two million.

The persevering Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and his Liberal colleagues renewed their efforts to restore harmony in the strife-ridden politics of India. Towards this end, they appointed in December 1944 a Conciliation Committee which was invited to make recommendations for settling the constitutional issue. The Committee drew up a well-knit and ably written Report which was published in March 1945. The labours of the Committee were, however, unceremoniously dismissed by Jinnah who called the esteemed conciliators "handmaids of the Congress" who had "played and are playing to the tune of Mr. Gandhi".

¹⁴ *King George VI*, John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Macmillan, 1958, pp. 702-03.

¹⁵ *India Wins Freedom*, Maulana Azad, p. 93. V. P. Menon has expressed a similar view in his book *Transfer of Power*, p. 166.

The good offices of Bhulabhai Desai, Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature, were similarly brushed aside.

The Secretary of State and the Viceroy now took a hand in trying to settle the political dispute. On June 14, 1945, Amery announced that the Viceroy's Executive Council would be re-constituted and that appointments to it would be made on a basis that would give a "balanced representation" to the main communities, "including equal proportions of Moslems and caste Hindus". The future of the princely States would remain unchanged. Congress leaders were released on June 15 to enable them to participate in the Simla Conference scheduled to be held on the 25th of that month. The British proposals were full of snags and limitations. Even as a compromise, they were manifestly unfair in granting parity of representation to the two parties on a communal basis. The Conference was, however, sent to its doom by Jinnah, who insisted that "all the Muslim members of the proposed Executive Council should be chosen by the Muslim League". It was an untenable claim. Though his party was growing in strength, it did not at this time hold control over any of the Muslim-majority provinces, except in Sind where also its position was essentially shaky. The League Ministry in the province could not survive without Congress support. Wavell, who could not concede Jinnah's demand, admitted to Maulana Azad that the League leader's unfair attitude was really responsible for the failure of the Conference. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the issue, it was gratifying to Jinnah that he could now fight any constitutional move to a standstill if it failed to appeal to him.

The advent of Labour to power in Britain at the end of July 1945 inspired hopes in India that the end of her political tribulations was in sight. Authorised by the new Government, Wavell announced on September 19 that steps would be taken to hasten the "realisation of full self-government in India". Elections would be held in the ensuing cold weather season to enable the creation of a Constituent Assembly for working out "a new free self-government constitution for British India or such part of it as was ready to consent to such a constitution".

The League fought the elections as if it was waging a *Jehad* or religious war. Besides serving freely the heady wine of "Pakistan" to the Muslim masses, it incited them to grasp the

opportunity for overthrowing the "tyranny" of the "Hindu Congress".¹⁶ So overwhelming was the display of religious fanaticism in many places that non-League candidates found it impossible to make any appearance on public platforms.¹⁷ Sheikh Abdul Majid, President of the Sind Muslim Jamiat, declared on December 13, 1945, that the elections in his province were a "huge farce" and roundly accused the Government officials of collusion with the League in ensuring its victory. Except in the North-West Frontier Province, where the Congress preserved its preponderance, the League's victory at the polls was overwhelming. Jinnah was naturally jubilant and told the British Parliamentary Delegation, which had arrived in India on January 5, 1946, that he would not look at any interim government unless the League was given equal representation with all the other parties—an obvious improvement on his stand at Simla! In addition, the principle of India's partition and the "need" for the creation of two constituent assemblies should be acknowledged as a pre-condition to his acquiescence in any temporary arrangement.

The Muslim League Legislators' Convention, held on April 9, 1946, did even better. In a resolution, moved by H. S. Suhrawardy and seconded by Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, the Convention drew a sharp contrast between the "code" of Indian Muslims and the Hindu *dharma* and philosophy, whose "tyranny" threatened "to reduce Muslims, Christians and other minorities to the status of irredeemable helots, socially and economically".¹⁸ Fortunately for Indian Islam, which had prospered and proliferated in the country for over nine hundred years, the discovery that the Hindu *dharma* was determined to destroy it was made betimes! Such were the forces of hatred and bigotry unleashed in this ancient land of tolerance and goodwill.

It was India's great good fortune that the Labour Government shared her nationalists' anxiety to settle the Indian question promptly. A special mission of Cabinet Ministers, consisting of the Secretary of State, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Stafford Cripps, and the First Lord of

¹⁶ *Nehru: A Political Biography*, Michael Brecher, p. 304.

¹⁷ *India Wins Freedom*, Maulana Azad, p. 124.

¹⁸ *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution*, Selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer and Appadorai, Vol. II, p. 570.

the Admiralty, A. V. Alexander, arrived in India on March 24, 1946. After prolonged discussions with the Indian leaders, which revealed the depth of the division in their opinions, the visiting Ministers and the Viceroy published their own proposals on May 16.

The British scheme, which attempted the impossible task of bridging the gulf between the demands of the Congress and the Muslim League, succeeded in pleasing neither party. It envisaged a Union of India, with the British Indian provinces and the princely States as its constituent parts. But the Centre was to be allowed jurisdiction only over Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications. All other subjects, including residuary powers, were to be vested in the provinces. Similarly, the States' accession to the Union was to be limited to only those subjects that were expressly surrendered by them. India was thus to have not a strong principal Government but an anaemic Centre. For purposes of organising provinces into groups, the May 16 offer divided British India into three distinct communal sections. The Hindu-majority Section A consisted of Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Province, and Orissa, while the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and Sind were to form Section B, with Muslim preponderance. The last Section comprised Bengal and Assam.

Provinces belonging to each Section were to group themselves together compulsorily. Each group was to have its own constitution, based on the subjects surrendered by the provinces to be administered by the regional government. India was thus to consist of a nominal Central authority, three powerful regional governments, and eleven provincial governments, with such degrees of autonomy as they chose to retain. The States were, of course, to be retained in all their bewildering variety. Apart from the fact that the scheme was inherently unsound and unworkable, it involved unwarranted injustice to small provinces, as they were certain to be dominated by their powerful neighbours under the group system. The Congress-minded N.-W.F. Province did not desire to be subjugated by the Punjab. Again, there was no justice or equity in clubbing the Hindu-majority province of Assam with Bengal.

It is true that individual provinces were given the option of not accepting the group constitution, but the procedure laid

down for exercising this right virtually vetoed any such move. Article 19 (VIII) of the scheme put the cart before the horse by prescribing that a province could decide on remaining autonomous only after the constitution had come into force. The prescription was in fact like forcing the fly to walk into the spider's parlour and asking it to clear out, if it could! Again, the provision, whereby a province could ask for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution at the end of each decade, put a premium on uncertainty. It would not have conduced to territorial or administrative stability, without which no long-term plans could be made for the material progress of the country.

India was extraordinarily lucky because she was not ensnared by a constitutional scheme which, while preserving a veneer of territorial unity, carried fertile seeds of dissension and disruption. Indian politics had now reached a stage when mutual accommodation between the rival parties became impossible. Jinnah did not leave anyone in doubt about the shape of things to come when, in an interview, he told Norman Cliff, foreign editor of the *News Chronicle* on March 31, that there was no such country as India and that he was not an Indian. It is a measure of the perversity of the Indian politics of those times that, while the League leader was making these assertions, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, with all the weight of the authority derived from his official position, declared with equal certitude from the same place, namely, New Delhi, and in the same month that the British Government regarded the Indian Muslims "as one of the great communities" in the country. There was thus a fundamental conflict between the approach of the League and that of the rest of India on the constitutional question. And yet Nehru was accused of having destroyed the Cabinet Mission's scheme by his forthright views on it on July 11, 1946, at a press conference in Bombay. The League had also accepted the scheme with mental reservations, for it saw the "germs" of Pakistan in the proposals. But we need not hurl accusations at any party because the May 16 offer did not deserve to survive.

India is deeply grateful to the Cabinet Mission for its monumental labours on her behalf, undertaken with such patience, skill and sympathy. It was not the fault of the Ministers that they could not produce an acceptable constitution, nor were

they to blame if no arrangements could be finalised by them for the formation of an interim government. The Mission which had come on March 24 left the country on June 29. Taking his stand on the Ministers' statement of June 16, Jinnah demanded that his party should be invited to join the Viceroy's Executive Council on the ground that it had accepted the plan of May 16. It was, of course, impossible for the Labour Government to countenance the injustice and the hazard involved in allowing India to be administered by an aggressively communal-minded party. The League leader's pride was deeply hurt when a few weeks later the Congress agreed to join the provisional government and when its willingness was welcomed by the Viceroy. Meeting on July 29, Jinnah's party resolved that the "Muslim nation" would resort to "direct action" to attain Pakistan, "to vindicate their honour and to get rid of the present British slavery and the contemplated future caste-Hindu domination". Jinnah, the devotee of the rule of law and a disciple of that prince of moderation, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, declared exultantly: "This day we bid goodbye to constitutional methods." The "Battle for Pakistan" was to be started on August 16.

In Bengal the "battle" was joined on the D Day against the helpless Hindu population in the streets of Calcutta. H. S. Suhrawardy was the Premier of the province at that time. He declared August 16 a public holiday so that the denizens of the criminal jungle of Calcutta might emerge from their dark hovels, armed with readily-supplied lethal weapons, and murder, loot and destroy at will. "Suhrawardy," writes Leonard Mosley, "loved money, champagne, Polish blondes and dancing the tango in night clubs, and he was reputed to have made a fortune during the war." This remarkable man, who could change his political convictions as easily as one discards one's unwanted clothes, loved Calcutta, including, to quote Mosley again, "its filthy, festering slums, and it was from the noisome alleyways of Howrah that he picked his *goondas* who accompanied him everywhere as a body guard".¹⁹

Addressing a mammoth gathering of fanatical and lawless men on the appointed day, he sent them into a delirium of excite-

¹⁹ *The Last Days of the British Raj*, Leonard Mosley, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961, p. 32.

ment and hatred by his unbridled speech. What followed beggars all description. The armed hordes fell upon the defenceless population with primeval ferocity and during the holocaust that raged for four days five thousand lives were lost, while thrice that number were wounded. General Tuker, who had exceptional opportunities of watching the Calcutta cataclysm, wrote: "It was unbridled savagery with homicidal maniacs let loose to kill and to maim and burn. The underworld of Calcutta was taking charge of the city."²⁰

The October riots at Noakhali in East Bengal were less bloody but equally brutal. The reprisals against the Muslims in the neighbouring provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were no less shameful for their savagery. Shunned and despised by Jinnah for the instability of his character, Suhrawardy hoped to salvage his political career in partitioned India by taking shelter behind the all-too-forgiving Mahatma Gandhi. He was forced to make the candid admission that he was really responsible for the terrible Calcutta cataclysm. The Mahatma sized him up in these simple but significant words: "What a curious man! It matters nothing to him what he says."²¹

Nehru and his colleagues joined the Viceroy's Executive Council on September 2, 1946, under the threatening omens of a civil war. Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, a Muslim patriot and scholar, was done to death in cold-blood for his temerity in placing country above communal passions. Before Nehru could settle down in his new position, Jinnah changed his mind and sent his men to join the Viceroy's Executive Council which was duly reconstituted on October 15. Led by Liaqat Ali Khan, the League group functioned in the Government with the inflexible determination to destroy it. The Finance portfolio, which he held, vastly helped him in this undertaking. Recalling the League's machinations of those days, Nehru said on February 7, 1959, that "there was an overwhelming sense of conflict and disruption" in the Government.

The part played by the officials during the years preceding and following India's partition and Independence was, to say the least, deplorable. It was indeed the twilight of the Raj.

²⁰ *While Memory Serves*, Lieut-General Sir Francis Tuker, Cassell, 1950, p. 160.

²¹ *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, Pyarelal, Vol. II, Navajivan Publishing House, 1958, p. 182

As far back as November 1941, Sir Francis Mudie, Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces, advised Khaliquzzaman, the League leader, to meet the Viceroy since it would be "fruitful to your cause of Pakistan".²² As Governor of West Punjab after partition, Mudie wrote to Jinnah on September 5, 1947: "I am telling everyone that I don't care how the Sikhs get across the border; the great thing is to get rid of them as soon as possible."²³ Nehru described Mudie and Sir George Abell, Wavell's Private Secretary, as the "English Mullahs".

During the great Calcutta Killing in 1946, the Governor of Bengal did not exercise his special powers under the Act of 1935 to prevent the murderous activities of the Muslim League ministry. "During the next year," writes Penderel Moon, "this apparent example of supineness was to be copied by others in humbler stations". During the Punjab holocaust in 1947, many British officers refused to render assistance to distressed minorities and asked the petitioners to go to Gandhi, Nehru and Patel for help. The same authority, who draws attention to these facts, describes the role played by Muslim officers in telling words. "To these men," he writes, "avid of power even a small dunghill was better than none at all."²⁴ In the North-West Frontier Province, the Governor, Sir Olaf Caroe, and his officials did everything in their power to dislodge the Congress ministry under Dr. Khan Sahib and to install the League in its place. Another active handyman of imperialism, Sir Conrad Corfield, who headed the Political Department of the Government of India, laboured indefatigably to disrupt the loyalty of the princes to their motherland. The descendants of Munro, Malcolm, Metcalfe and Elphinstone, who had made the vision of a united India a reality, were now busily engaged in undoing their epic achievement.

Viewed from any point of view, the partition of India into two independent Dominions appeared to be the only sensible solution to the country's political problem. The failure of the London talks in December 1946 between the Indian leaders and the British Government gave added strength to this conviction. On February 20, 1947, Attlee made the historic announcement

²² *Pathway to Pakistan*, Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, p. 257.

²³ *The Last Days of the British Raj*, Leonard Mosley, p. 244. Also quoted by many other writers.

²⁴ *Divide and Quit*, Penderel Moon, p. 69.

that responsibility for the Government of India would be transferred to her people by a date not later than June 1948 and that Admiral Mountbatten would assume the Indian Viceroyalty in order to fulfil this great task. The manner of Wavell's exit was unfortunate, but the British Government was convinced that the tired soldier had nothing more constructive to suggest concerning the Indian problem than a "military evacuation plan". Later, Attlee confirmed this fact in his book.²⁵

It is remarkable that, even in the year of India's independence, when some of the outstanding landmarks of British rule had already begun to fade out of existence, there was no change of heart on the part of the votaries of imperialism. Lord Templewood, formerly Sir Samuel Hoare, felt the prospect of losing India with the intensity of personal bereavement. Speaking in the House of Lords on February 25, 1947, he demanded that Britain should "refuse to accept final separation before our obligations and responsibilities are discharged". Lord Simon, formerly Sir John Simon, another Old India Hand, gave a similar performance on the following day and asserted that the "end of this business" would be "to degrade the British name". Lord Samuel, Leader of the Liberal Party, however, silenced all such critics by pointing out that they had signally failed to indicate what the Opposition course would be.

As was to be expected, Churchill's attack on the Government's decision was unsurpassed for its bitterness. Speaking in the House of Commons on March 6, he described the scheme for the transfer of power to India as "operation scuttle" and called Nehru "the most bitter enemy of any connection between India and the British Commonwealth".²⁶ Importing greater heat into his oratory, he complained: "The whole thing wears the aspect of an attempt by the Government to make use of brilliant war figures to cover up a melancholy and disastrous transaction."

Mountbatten took charge of the Indian administration on March 24, 1947. Tall, handsome, overflowing with physical and mental energy and superlatively self-confident, the new Viceroy,

²⁵ *As it Happened*, Clement Attlee, Heinemann, 1954, p. 183.

²⁶ Churchill's speech was an outburst of anger. About Nehru's attitude towards Britain even in those troubled times, it is enough to record that he surprised Mountbatten by "actually suggesting at one point an Anglo-Indian Union, involving nothing less than common citizenship—in effect, a far closer bond than Commonwealth status. . . ." (*Mission with Mountbatten*, Alan Campbell-Johnson, Robert Hale, 1951, p. 45.)

in contrast with his predecessor, was soon convinced that only quick action would meet the requirements of the Indian situation. In the Punjab, an inferno had begun to rage, following the resignation of the coalition Ministry of Malik Khizar Hyat Khan on March 3 and the failure of the Muslim League to take its place. On March 21, Master Tara Singh stated it as an axiom of Sikh policy that his community would not join any Government that was dominated by the League. Thwarted in its drive to capture power, the League unleashed infernal forces of disorder and violence on an unprecedented scale with the aid of its militarized National Guards. Savage attacks on the minorities were made in Multan, Rawalpindi, Amritsar and in many other places. The Muslim mobs, says Penderel Moon, "suddenly, as though on a pre-concerted signal, came out in their true colours and with weapons in their hands and, in some places, steel helmets on their heads, indulged in murder, loot and arson on a scale never witnessed before in the Punjab during a hundred years of British rule". At Sheikupura several thousands of Hindus and Sikhs were killed in a few hours. Rightly does the author say: "This foretaste of the blessings of Pakistan was hardly encouraging to the minority communities in West Punjab."²⁷ The North-West Frontier Province was also menaced with a similar situation, Jinnah having publicly announced in May 1947 his approval of the murderous "direct action" movement with the object of ousting Dr. Khan Sahib's ministry.

Every circumstance thus demanded quick action. Mountbatten decided to act while the initiative still remained with the Raj. He saw how Jinnah's ambitions rose with every moment's delay. The League leader not only refused to countenance the partition of Bengal and Punjab, but on May 21 demanded a corridor right across the heart of India in order to link West Punjab with East Bengal! Both these demands were, of course, dismissed as "fantastic nonsense". The League leader did not evidently take seriously his joint declaration with Gandhi on April 15, condemning the growing lawlessness and violence in the country. Fanaticism, as he declared after realis-

²⁷ *Divide and Quit*, Penderel Moon, pp. 78, 79, 261. The author asserts that "Jinnah knew no more of the Punjab than Neville Chamberlain did of Czechoslovakia", p. 37.

ing his heart's desire, was capable of yielding good dividends. "Don't decry fanatics," he admonished Mrs. Casey, wife of the Governor of undivided Bengal, in later months, "if I hadn't been a fanatic there would never have been Pakistan."²⁸

Advised by the Viceroy, who visited England in May, the British Government announced on June 3, 1947 a plan for the partition of India. The historic document provided for the creation of two Dominions on Indian soil. Each country was to have its own constitution-making body. The seceding territory was to consist of the Muslim-majority areas comprising parts of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam and the whole of Sind and the North-West Frontier Province. The partition of the first two provinces was to be undertaken and their new boundaries demarcated through an expert Commission after ascertaining the verdict of the legislators from the non-Muslim majority areas whether they preferred to join Pakistan or remain with India.

Sylhet, a Muslim-majority district in Assam, was to be detached from that province and joined to East Bengal in Pakistan if it was so desired by its inhabitants. Sind was to make its choice of joining either Dominion through its Legislative Assembly which was to be convened specially for the purpose. Despite the fact that it was a Congress stronghold, the North-West Frontier Province was to hold a referendum in order to take a similar decision. Its geographical position warranted the adoption of such a procedure. The partition plan also indicated the British Government's willingness to anticipate the date June 1948 so that India might come into her own even earlier. Popular verdict in the provinces and the districts where it was ascertained was on the lines anticipated. Fearing widespread violence and bloodshed if they took part in the referendum, the Khan brothers allowed events to take their own course in the North-West Frontier Province. Their plea for Pathanistan was contemptuously dismissed by Jinnah as "insidious and spurious".

A Bill, providing for the independence of India, was introduced in the two Houses of Parliament on July 4. Lord Listowel, the new Secretary of State for India, commended the measure as marking the "fulfilment of a great purpose". The Indian Independence Act, besides sanctioning the creation of two Dominions, provided for the establishment of the necessary

²⁸ *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, Hector Bolitho, Macmillan, 1954, p. 167.

machinery for the country's partition. A Partition Council and an Arbitral Tribunal were duly set up. The delicate task of dividing the armed forces was entrusted to the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, who was to be known as the Supreme Commander from the day the two Dominions came into existence. It was decided that India's independence should be declared on August 15, with the seceding areas assuming a similar status on the preceding day and calling themselves Pakistan.

August 15 is indeed a great day in India's calendar. On that memorable day in 1947 devout prayers were offered from the tabernacle of every patriotic heart for the fulfilment of the long-cherished aspirations of the Indian people. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly, Nehru greeted the dawn of independence in words that will live long. "Long years ago," he declared, "we had made tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but substantially." It was midnight when he was delivering this oration. "When the world sleeps," he continued, "India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance."

Lord and Lady Mountbatten, whose popularity in India was not matched by any foreigner, were greeted with delirious enthusiasm by the Delhi populace as the messengers of the country's independence. Responding to the earnest plea of Indian leaders, Mountbatten agreed to continue as their country's first constitutional head. In a generous acknowledgment of the Indian gesture, he told the Constituent Assembly: "No words can express our gratitude for the understanding and co-operation as well as the true sympathy and generosity of spirit which have been shown to us at all times." Apart from other advantages, the presence of Mountbatten in India after independence was greatly helpful in minimising the perversion of the history of those troubled times by hostile writers.

August 14 saw the birth of Pakistan, whose people celebrated the event with becoming enthusiasm. The sapling-thin body of Jinnah, its creator, was aglow with indescribable ecstasy, while his soul was suffused with a great sense of fulfilment. His

name will undoubtedly live as a maker of history. It was his pertinacity, his zeal and his almost uncanny capacity to anticipate events that made Pakistan a reality. Jinnah's aspirations for a separate Muslim State would, however, have remained a chimera, had not the war and the British Government come to his aid, but it is undeniable that it was his insight and his shrewd and uncompromising leadership that made his goal an accomplished fact. Indeed, so incredibly great was his achievement that till his last days he remained unsure about the durability of his handiwork. It was his misfortune that he was not spared long enough either to exorcise his hallucinations or to enjoy the fruits of his labour.

Jinnah, with his lieutenants and subordinates, had left for Karachi a week before the creation of his new State. By then realisation had begun to dawn upon the minds of his Indian Muslim followers that, however great their leader's achievement, their own share in the windfall was nothing. It was they who had spearheaded the movement for Pakistan and lent fanatical support to the "two-nation" doctrine. They had generated immense bitterness, hatred and animosity in the country in their zeal for a cause which, had they cared to reflect even for a few fleeting moments, could never benefit them. The prime-movers of the campaign could certainly find asylum in the new State, but Pakistan could not embrace the entire Muslim population of India. Both Jinnah and other sponsors of the "two-nation" theory had thus created an impossible situation for their co-religionists in this country.

Khaliquzzaman, a central figure in the separatist movement, has recorded that, following the British Government's announcement of the partition plan on June 3, 1947, the Muslim League ceased to hold any meetings in this country. He complains that the party was not consulted at all when the original dateline for the transfer of power was changed and August 14 fixed for heralding the advent of Pakistan. Nor did Jinnah take the League leaders from India into his confidence when he decided to confer the Governor-Generalship of the new State upon himself.²⁹ The thought that division of India would also divide the

²⁹ Commenting on Jinnah's position in Pakistan, Campbell-Johnson writes: "He makes only the most superficial attempt to disguise himself as a constitutional Governor-General. . . . Here indeed is Pakistan's King-Emperor, Archbishop of Canterbury, Speaker and Prime Minister concentrated into one formidable Quaid-e-Azam" (*Mission with Mountbatten*, Alan Campbell-Johnson, Robert Hale, 1951, p. 156).

Muslim community became oppressive to those who could not go to Pakistan. "A natural barrier," to quote Khaliquzzaman, "even between Muslims of the majority and minority provinces, had begun to be felt, heralding the future shape of things." On August 1, a few days before Jinnah left for Karachi, he was confronted at a farewell meeting in New Delhi by a Muslim follower with a series of questions about the future of Muslims in this country. "I had," writes the author, "never before found Mr. Jinnah so disconcerted as on this occasion." We are further told that the supreme exponent of separatism "took the earliest opportunity to bid goodbye to his two-nation theory".³⁰ The disillusionment was soon becoming widespread. Writing to Khaliquzzaman on September 10, 1947, Suhrawardy, another shining light of the Muslim League, declared: "The Muslims in the Indian Union have been left high and dry." Both these men belatedly realised that the "two-nation" theory "never paid any dividend to us" and that after partition "it proved positively injurious to the Muslims of India, and on a long-range basis, for Muslims everywhere".³¹

Jinnah, it is reasonable to suppose, must have been overwhelmed by similar thoughts. Since it was impossible for him to retrace his steps, he lived in perpetual fear whether the house built by him on such artificial foundations would endure. "Jinnah's mood," writes Campbell-Johnson, "was one of depression, almost fatalism. He kept harping on the masochistic theme that India was out to destroy the nation of his making, and his attitude to every personality and act of policy across the border was coloured by that general assumption."³² Such fears were, however, wholly unfounded, since Pakistan, in spite of its manifest irrationality, offered the only solution to the Indian problem.

It was evident from the drift of political events over a period of decades that India would never have known peace or prosperity so long as the Muslim-majority provinces remained within her fold. The seed of suspicion and separatism had been so well and truly planted in the Indian soil by Minto's communal

³⁰ *Pathway to Pakistan*, Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, p. 321.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 400. Latifur Rahman, Leader of the Muslim League Party in the Orissa Assembly, in a statement dated September 25, 1947, declared: "The Mussalmans of the Indian Union now realise that they have committed a blunder in supporting the movement for Pakistan."

³² *Mission with Mountbatten*, Alan Campbell-Johnson, p. 230.

electorates that it became impossible to establish a common political platform between the Muslims and the rest of the population. The generous political concessions, embodied in the Lucknow Pact of 1916 and the Motilal Nehru Constitution of 1928, merely whetted Muslim communal appetite. Jinnah's Fourteen Points were little more than a tardy concession to the need for a central authority in the country. The demand for the grant of a statutory majority to Muslims in certain provinces, even though they enjoyed numerical superiority in them, and for the vesting of residuary powers in the constituent units was not only an expression of lack of confidence in the non-Muslim communities, but also amounted in an indirect advocacy of the dangerous doctrine of hostages.

It is an indisputable fact that there was always a considerable body of Muslim opinion which did not go farther than envisage a Centre with an extremely limited jurisdiction. Soon after the adoption of the partition resolution by the Muslim League at Lahore in 1940, there was a harvest of "constitutions" produced by knowledgeable men as well as pseudo-experts, each excelling the other in recommending the cutting of India into mince-meat. Leaving aside the blue-prints of extremists, we find even a level-headed statesman like Sir Sikander Hyat Khan suggesting an extreme form of provincial autonomy, with the zonal governments virtually performing the functions of the principal authority. The Centre was to administer only Defence, External Affairs, Communications, Customs, Coinage and Currency. No less a person than Maulana Azad, the Congress President, considered it perfectly reasonable to reduce the Central items to three. Such schemes, however, wholly overlooked the realities of the situation. A country of India's vastness, diversity and backwardness needed a strong Central Government, not only to safeguard its integrity, but also to ensure its material progress. The fact that the country abounded in self-regarding and reactionary princely States was an additional reason for the indispensability of such an authority.

Even assuming that a weak agency Centre would have met the requirements of the situation, it is inconceivable that the Union Government would have functioned smoothly or efficiently, especially after the virulent propagation of the "two-nation" theory and the formulation of the equally untenable doctrine

of parity of representation for Muslims in relation to the rest of the population. The hatred stimulated by the "two-nation" doctrine had so thoroughly permeated India's life that even the temples of learning were not immune from it. In a preface to their treatise entitled *The Problem of Indian Muslims and Its Solution*, two Professors of Aligarh University, Syed Zafarul Hasan and Dr. Mohammed Afzal Husain Qadri, wrote: "We are convinced that we, the Muslims of India, must insist persistently and strenuously on them, namely, that the Muslims of India are a nation by themselves . . . they have a distinct national entity wholly different from the Hindus and other non-Muslim groups; indeed they are more different from the Hindus than the Sudeten-Germans were from the Czechs. . . ." ³³ Aligarh, it must be remembered, is in the heart of India.

It is mere wishful thinking to suppose that such inflammatory and mendacious writings even by responsible men would not have seriously damaged the communal relations if the administrative unity of India could somehow be preserved. The remarks of an impartial observer like Penderel Moon thoroughly disprove such facile assumptions. "The cry for Pakistan," says Moon, "appealed to and excited powerful appetites and individual hopes, and these, once aroused, could not be readily assuaged." Besides, with the League's demands pitched extravagantly high, it would have been impossible to preserve the Centre from going to pieces. The absurd "fifty-fifty" ratio would have confronted the administrators at every turn. No less a person than Sir Sultan Ahmed, noted for his moderate political outlook, prescribed this panacea in all seriousness. He went a step further and suggested that the office of Prime Minister should be held by a Muslim and a non-Muslim by rotation. Similarly, the Defence Minister must belong to Sir Sultan's religion if the Commander-in-Chief happened to profess another faith, and vice versa. The civil services should be shared equally by the two communities, while the armed services should consist of 50 per cent Muslims.³⁴ Apart from the fact that this is a classic example of heads we win, tails you lose, no serious-minded person can suggest that India could ever have known peace and tranquillity under such a dispensation. Again, few

³³ *Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution*, selected by Sir Maurice Gwyer & Appadorai, Vol. II, p. 462.

³⁴ *Constitutional Proposals of the Sapru Committee*, Appendix VI, p. xlv.

constitutional *pundits* cared to make constructive proposals for grasping the nettle of the princely States. Would it ever have been possible to abolish the States if the Muslim League had been given a major share in the Government of India? In view of these facts, partition offered the only suitable remedy.

If partition was an appropriate solution, was it impossible to avoid the unprecedented tragedy that accompanied it? A good deal has been written on this subject, accusing Lord Mountbatten of unwittingly causing such widespread distress by unduly hastening India's freedom. It is true, as Mountbatten himself stated, that the mighty task of dividing a vast country inhabited by 400 millions, was undertaken and completed in less than 2½ months, while it took two years to separate Sind from Bombay and Orissa from Bihar. But there is reason to believe that, had the original dateline, namely, June 1948, been adhered to, there would probably have been no government left by then in many parts of India. Apart from the fact that the administrative services were, as we saw earlier, deeply influenced by the prevailing atmosphere of dissension and disruption, their number would have dangerously run down by the middle of 1948. The certainty of the withdrawal of the Raj had the most unsettling effect on the minds of many British officers. C. Rajagopalachari told Mountbatten with all the weight of his experience that if the Viceroy had not transferred power when he did, there would well have been no power to transfer.

In his address to the Indian Constituent Assembly on August 15, 1947, Mountbatten himself explained why he had decided on that date for what the *Manchester Guardian* described as "the greatest disengagement action in history". Referring to the seriousness of the communal situation that confronted him when he came to India, the Viceroy said: "It seemed to me that a decision had to be taken at the earliest possible moment unless there was to be risk of a general conflagration throughout the whole sub-continent."³⁵

His critics would perhaps have been on firm ground if they could prove that no prudent plans had been made to ensure an orderly transfer of power to the two Dominions. As a safeguard against any sudden or large-scale outbreak of violence in the sub-continent, it had been suggested that India and Pakis-

³⁵ *Mission with Mountbatten*, Alan Campbell-Johnson, p. 298.

tan should have a common Governor-General and an undivided army till the end of a reasonable period of transition. Nehru and Sardar Patel not only desired that Mountbatten should be the first Governor-General of free India, but promised not to take it amiss if he were to accept the same office in Pakistan. But Jinnah decided otherwise and himself assumed the office of Governor-General in Pakistan. According to Campbell-Johnson, he "indicated that he had taken the decision somewhat against his will on the insistence of his close friends". The author asked to know who those friends were because Jinnah's "senior colleagues and well-wishers" had been advising him strongly to the contrary. This unexpected turn of events, says Lord Ismay, was a blow. The Conservatives in England were disappointed at Jinnah's "eleventh hour bombshell", but agreed that Mountbatten should be asked to remain as Governor-General of New India.³⁶

A powerful army, unaffected by the virus of communalism, would undoubtedly have been a great asset for the peaceful and orderly transfer of populations when the partition of the Punjab and the demarcation of the boundaries of the divided provinces was announced. But again Jinnah would have none of it. Let Lord Ismay, with his intimate knowledge of the inside story, speak: "I did my utmost to persuade Mr. Jinnah to reconsider his decision. I suggested that both the new Governments would have special need of an instrument on which they could rely in the early days of their nationhood, and that the Indian Army as at present constituted was ideal for their purpose." Ismay continues: "But Jinnah was adamant. He said that he would refuse to take over power on 15 August unless he had an army of appropriate strength and predominantly Moslem composition under his control."³⁷ It would, therefore, be unjust to Mountbatten and historically untrue to say that his so-called rush

³⁶ *The Memoirs of Lord Ismay*, Heinemann, 1960, pp. 429-30.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 428. Alan Campbell-Johnson, who was also close to the events, anticipated such criticisms of his chief and gave a candid appraisal of the situation to a friend in London. He wrote: "I need hardly stress that Mountbatten and Ismay would have fervently welcomed any practicable arrangement for Auchinleck to stay on, but it was Jinnah who was most insistent of all in refusing to have anything to do with the retention of a joint military system after the transfer of power and in demanding the immediate creation of the Pakistan Army." (*Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 258.)

tactics were responsible for the holocaust in the Punjab and elsewhere.

Thus ended the British Raj in India, the record of whose achievements has already been partly assessed in the earlier chapters. Unique in many ways, the Raj covered a period of 190 years from the year of Plassey to 1947, while the Moghul Empire, beginning with Babar's conquest of Delhi in 1527 and ending with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, lasted some 180 years. Maratha hegemony, dating from the coronation of Shivaji in 1674 and ending with the surrender of the last Peshwa Bajirao to the British in 1818, endured for 144 years. But the distinctiveness of the British Empire in India consisted not in its duration, but in the profound impression which it made upon the life and outlook of her people.

It was a noteworthy feature of the Raj that, from its beginning till its end, it remained essentially foreign. The Government was undoubtedly enlightened, least violent, and even benign, but it failed to win the affection of the people. India was treated as a colony, consisting of a vast mass of miscellaneous humanity, which was considered to need protection not only from external aggression but also from itself. Indeed, the responsibilities of British guardianship, it was felt, were all-embracing and they certainly included the determination of the political and economic future of the country. That is the reason why, despite the three major constitutional instruments of 1909, 1918 and 1935, the Raj remained a highly centralised bureaucracy till the end. To hold India as a dependency was regarded in Britain as both a national and an imperial necessity and this conviction grew into an obsession, especially after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and following the rapid growth of European dominance over the rest of the world as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Few British or European statesmen realised at the time that by their overseas ambitions and aggressions, which were not infrequently accompanied by jingoistic outbursts, they were unwittingly paving the way for a terrible disaster to mankind. Late in the scramble for colonies, militarised countries like Germany nursed a deep hatred for the new dispensation and swore, at the instigation of their embittered political and economic philosophers like Friedrich List and

Treitschke, to destroy Britain. Collision with her was considered absolutely unavoidable.³⁸

No such threats could, however, daunt Britain for the obvious reason that she was not prepared to take the lead in scuttling her Empire when countries like France and even smaller nations like the Dutch, the Belgians and the Portuguese controlled fabulously rich and vast overseas territories and nourished their own economies by exploiting their colonial subjects. It was, therefore, sheer madness to suggest that Britain should relinquish India as an act of self-abnegation and thus wantonly throw away the glory, the power and the immense economic advantage which she derived from the prevailing dispensation. It was, of course, imperative that the country should be governed well, but this was to be done only by its guardians from abroad. "India for Indians" was, therefore, a political heresy and a dangerous shibboleth that deserved to be despised and suppressed. Caution and coercion thus became the bedrock of British policy in India, with all its inner contradictions and injustices.

It is precisely because the Raj could function in India only as a police State that its attitude towards the country's social problems was one of timidity and indifference. The lessons of the Mutiny of 1857 had sunk so deep into the minds and hearts of the bureaucrats that they felt a kind of holy horror at the prospect of remedying even the graver evils in the Indian society. It is true that some courageous British Indian statesmen had successfully combated such abominations as the *suttee*, infanticide and human sacrifices, but, apart from the fact that these barbarous practices were not widespread, the reform was accomplished well before the rebellion of 1857. An evil like untouchability, which has long disgraced the Hindu society, could not be controlled merely by the reformer without official action. Abolition of untouchability is among the Fundamental Rights embodied in the Constitution of free India. It was impossible to think of such a statutory measure under British rule which in fact did everything in its power to encourage the Depressed Classes to crystallise themselves into a separate community and claim a vested interest in their very backwardness. It is small

³⁸ *The German Colonial Claim*, L. S. Amery, W. & R. Chambers, 1939, p. 49.

wonder, therefore, that in British India the record of State action in promoting social reform was singularly sterile.

The Government's achievement in the sphere of the country's economic development was equally noteworthy for its meagreness. It is true that before the beginning of the last war, more than 32 million acres of British India were watered by Government works, but, considering the vastness of the cultivable land and the number of rivers available for affording irrigation facilities on a bigger scale, the administration's achievement in that direction, though commendable, was certainly not impressive. India's problem of poverty and economic backwardness could not be dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis. Systematic planning, designed to promote domestic savings, investment and enterprise, was an essential pre-requisite to the launching of a really effective crusade against want. It was equally important to attract capital and talent from many countries, and not merely from Britain, to start new industries and other projects useful for galvanizing the country's stagnant economy. All this required enormous sums of money and it was neither possible for Britain nor was it her policy to undertake the responsibility of raising such large resources. In plain fact, India's economic regeneration for the benefit of her own people, conflicted fundamentally with the very *raison d'être* of the British Raj in the country.

Even so, India's debt of gratitude to Britain is inestimable. In fact, her liberation was implicit in the very nature of the Indo-British connection. It is impossible to repudiate Turgot's sage observation, namely, that "colonies are like fruits which cling to the tree only till they ripen". The fact that India could not be held for ever had become abundantly clear to many of the discerning builders of the British Empire in this country. Men like Munro, Malcolm, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Moira and Metcalfe were convinced that it was useless for Britain to dream of "perpetual domination" in India. Malcolm showed admirable judgment when he declared that, while the Company Government could hope to change the outlook of the Indian people, it was impossible for it to change its own foreign character. And yet the same foreign Government gave the inhabitants of this country some of the fundamental aids to regain the consciousness of their oneness. A

politically distracted India was rescued from the throes of civil disorder and was given a strong and stable government whose writ became unchallenged throughout the length and breadth of the country. Despite its vastness, India ceased to have distant points, with the introduction of quick modes of travel and communication. Movement and correspondence became incredibly easier, cheaper and quicker, all of which were an inestimable asset to the growth of national awakening.

The English language became another powerful cementing factor. It was adopted not merely as the language of public administration, but also as the vehicle of study. It is true that being foreign, it could not be an effective medium of thought, but it certainly became the gateway of knowledge. Access to Western literature, science, medicine and law became possible through its instrumentality. In fact, it ended the mental isolation of India and brought her intelligentsia into intimate contact with the life-giving founts of modern knowledge. English and the new system of education helped the educated classes not merely to study the great classics of the West, but also to learn the language of protest and agitation against an unwanted government. It also stimulated in them a passionate desire for political liberty and national independence.

Again, the concept of the supremacy of law was almost alien to India before the advent of the British rule. "There is," wrote Munro in 1798, "no law in India but the will of the sovereign." Such a disposition conflicted with British ideas of liberty and justice so that among the first institutions introduced into the country by the Company Government was a hierarchy of law courts, with the High Court functioning as the palladium of liberty. India was thus given a government of laws and not of men. Indeed, the country is deeply indebted to Britain for its system of administration, its laws and regulations, its educational system and, what is equally important, for its ability to admire and to adhere to democratic principles and institutions. Commenting on the development of British institutions in as much as half of the habitable globe, Sir Ivor Jennings says: "If two small islands are by courtesy styled 'Great', America, Australia, India, must form a Greater Britain."³⁹ India has

³⁹ *Party Politics: The Stuff of Politics*, Sir Ivor Jennings, Cambridge, 1962, p. 247.

certainly no reason to dispute this patriotic claim by the distinguished constitutional expert on behalf of his country.

Unfortunately, this great legacy was not allowed to find its natural fulfilment. As we saw in the earlier pages, Britain showed an obstinate reluctance to part with power voluntarily until the very last years of her stay in this country. The writing on the wall was ignored so that, under the compulsion of events, her own volition on the issue of Indian freedom became almost irrelevant. Assertive nationalism in the country, the mighty event of the Second World War, growing international interest in Indian freedom, and the advent of Labour to power in Britain,—all combined to free India from her political dependence. The birth of the Indian National Army, the enormous public interest created by the trial of its personnel at the Red Fort in Delhi in 1945, and the revolt of the naval ratings in Bombay in February 1946 were unmistakable indications that the armed forces also did not want the Raj to continue.

The Canadian Professor, Michael Brecher, has firmly discounted the doctrine of Britain's generosity in the matter of her withdrawal from India. He holds that "only a realisation that power could not be retained except at an excessive cost ensured the outcome of 1947".⁴⁰ General Sir Francis Tuker has stated the military point of view thus: "Ultimately we found that this garrison commitment was more than the industrial needs of our impoverished country could stand. That was another very strong reason for our leaving India and leaving it quickly."⁴¹ Nevertheless, the magnificent gesture of the Labour Government and the enormous benefits derived by India from her apprenticeship to British rule, have brought the two countries closer together as never before. China's cynical invasion of the northern borders of India in October 1962 and the generous assistance received by her from America and the Commonwealth countries to face the aggression, have fully demonstrated that both her security and the advancement of her material interests lie in her remaining on the friendliest terms with the Western Democracies.

⁴⁰ *Nehru: A Political Biography*, Michael Brecher, pp 372, 373.

⁴¹ *While Memory Serves*, Lieut-General Sir Francis Tuker, Cassell, 1950, p. 518.

12. THE SILENT REVOLUTION

INDIA, which won her political independence in August 1947, inherited problems of heart-breaking complexity. The unbridled crusade of the Muslim League on behalf of the fictitious "two-nation" theory precipitated a situation that gravely affected the lives and careers of millions of people on both sides of the divided sub-continent. Following the inability of the Muslim and the non-Muslim members of the Boundary Commissions, charged with the responsibility of recommending the partition of the Punjab and Bengal to agree on where the lines of demarcation should be drawn, the British Chairman of the two bodies, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, found himself in the unenviable position of giving his own decisions in the shape of an award. The task assigned to Radcliffe, besides being thankless, was rendered immeasurably difficult since the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal and the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Punjab, in addition to being inextricably mixed up, had lived together for centuries in a spirit of complete amity and understanding.

In the Punjab, for instance, there had been a steadily growing awakening among its people who, since the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the great founder of the Sikh Empire, had developed a unique type of regional nationalism. The interdependence among the three principal communities in all things that really matter was complete. And yet these very people, who had everything to gain by remaining one, were incited to fall upon one another with complete savagery, as if they had been inveterate enemies from time immemorial. Not only did the Muslim League make no efforts to allay the apprehensions of the minorities about the future dispensation, but no less a person than the founder of Pakistan showed an amazing indifference to their fate. For instance, he told Nawab Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, Prime Minister of the princely State of Bahawalpur, that the Sikhs could go to the devil in their own way.¹

¹ *Divide and Quit*, Penderel Moon, Chatto & Windus, 1961, p. 87.

Both on the eve of the partition of the province and in the months that followed that tragic event, the masses were encouraged to take the law into their own hands. "If the peasant runs amuck," says a Punjabi proverb, "it takes God to hold him." Considering the ghastly tragedy that overtook the province, one is inclined to doubt whether even God could have been equal to the task of holding the infuriated and fanatical peasantry in check. An extremely dangerous situation was rendered even more desperate when the Radcliffe Award was announced on August 17, 1947. It was natural that the Award pleased none. Radcliffe found it impossible to adopt any of the known and accepted principles of territorial demarcation with any degree of consistency. Dr. Ambedkar was one of the few discerning leaders in India who had foreseen the calamitous consequences of attempting to divide districts and *tehsils* by merely counting the communal heads. In the prevailing circumstances, the important provision that "other factors" should also be taken into account went almost unheeded. The Sikh leaders had hoped that the line of division would stretch as far as the river Chenab so that the rich colony lands of the Lyallpur and Montgomery districts, which they had laboured for generations to develop, would belong to India. But their expectations were doomed to bitter disappointment. In fact, the partition of the Punjab plunged as much as 40 per cent of the entire Sikh community into penury, remorselessly driving its members to seek refuge in India.

Perhaps, the most frightening aspect of the partition was, as Nehru so aptly put it, the division of men's minds. The Radcliffe Award gave an impetus to the movement that Pakistan belonged exclusively to the Muslims, with no room in it for their countrymen of other faiths. A regular campaign was, therefore, launched to drive out the non-Muslims in their millions, in most cases forcing them to take with them little more than their personal belongings to their unspecified destinations. The spectacle of large populations being ruthlessly uprooted from their ancestral homes, of women being abducted and exposed to unspeakable indignities, and of men, women and children being butchered in cold-blood, sent a wave of horror throughout the length and breadth of divided India. Speaking at one of his prayer meetings, Mahatma Gandhi lamented: "I

have heard that a convoy of Hindus and Sikhs fifty-seven miles long is pouring into the Indian Union from West Punjab. It makes my brain reel to think how this can be. Such a happening is unparalleled in the history of the world.”²

Violence and destruction thus became a fundamental doctrine in those days when the gates of mercy were closed upon the unfortunate minorities on both sides of the border. In spite of his great age, Gandhi threw himself into the mighty task of promoting reconciliation between the two communities with his characteristic determination and thoroughness. By his prolonged presence in the province and by his indefatigable labours, he saved Bengal from a repetition of the terrible holocaust of 1946. Rightly did Mountbatten acclaim him as the “one man boundary force” that saved a large province from sinking into chaos.

The spectacle presented by the Punjab was, however, different. Sir Malcolm Darling, who knew the province intimately, wrote that on the day of India’s independence the Punjab was “ripped in two like a piece of old cloth and handed over in a day to anarchy, savagery and ruin”.³ The displaced persons that poured into East Punjab and the neighbouring region of Delhi, nursed deep resentment at their undeserved fate and many among them were not loath to have recourse to reprisals. The defection and exodus of the Muslim personnel of the Indian police force had vastly depleted its strength, thus aggravating the problem of law and order in the country’s capital itself. We obtain a true measure of the madness of the times when it is recalled that no less a person than Dr. Zakir Hussain, a great nationalist, an eminent educationist and now the popular Vice-President of the Indian Union, narrowly escaped being lynched in Delhi.

Gandhi’s exhortations for sanity at his daily prayer meetings and his special pleadings on behalf of the Muslim minorities in India sounded strangely incongruous, especially when the mob fury in West Pakistan remained unabated. The astonishing behaviour of Choudhry Khaliquzzaman, about whom we have already written so much, hardly conduced to the restoration of confidence between the two communities. Seconding Nehru’s

² *Edwina: The Biography of the Countess Mountbatten of Burma*, Madeline Masson, 1958, pp. 206-07.

³ *At Freedom’s Door*, Sir Malcolm Darling, Oxford, 1949, pp. 305-06.

resolution in the Constituent Assembly on the day of independence, which pledged the Indian people's loyalty and dedicated service to their motherland, the League leader made a speech that won for him the warm embrace of the Prime Minister.⁴ But the same man suddenly disappeared from India soon after and emerged into Pakistan!

Again, the behaviour of a section of the Muslim community in Delhi did not help to strengthen the hands of either the Mahatma or of the Government in the difficult task of pacifying the frustrated and angry displaced persons from Pakistan.⁵ Even so, Gandhi never wavered in his resolution to preach his famous message of peace, love and tolerance and to practise it. He went on a fast from January 12, 1948, declaring with complete candour that it had been undertaken on behalf of the Muslims in India and against the Hindus and Sikhs. He also used this familiar method of self-flagellation in order to secure the abrogation of the Government of India's earlier decision to withhold the payment of Rs. 55 crores to Pakistan, due to that country under the Indo-Pakistan Financial Settlement of December 1947. It was characteristic of him that the Government's argument that the money, if given at that time, would be spent by Pakistan on strengthening her military position against India in the Kashmir dispute, carried no weight with him at all.

It has been observed by some writers that the death of Mahatma Gandhi at the hands of an assassin (January 30, 1948) provided a fitting finale to a unique career. Most people will not accept such a judgment, but there can be no doubt that this fearless and unarmed soldier, who enshrined in his person the hopes and aspirations of the common people as well as their immeasurable strength, met his end as cheerfully as he had always claimed that he would.

⁴ *Pathway to Pakistan*, Choudhry Khaliqzaman, Longmans, 1961, p. 395

⁵ Gandhi's Secretary, Pyarelal, writes: "In Delhi searches of Muslim houses by the police had revealed dumps of bombs, arms and ammunition. Sten guns, Bren guns, mortars and wireless transmitter sets were seized and secret miniature factories for the manufacture of the same were uncovered." (*Mahatma Gandhi: Last Phase*, Vol. II, Navajivan Publishing House, 1958, pp. 437-38.) Similar preparations were made in the Muslim localities of many other cities with the object of provoking civil strife and disorder. According to press reports of October 10, 1947, huge quantities of arms and ammunition were recovered from many Muslim houses in Patna, necessitating the imposition of a curfew in a part of the city. In the former Central Provinces, arms-running by members of the minority community assumed menacing proportions, Jubbulpore taking pride of place in such dangerous activities.

Gandhi was not fashioned out of the ordinary clay. Like Confucius, he believed in truth and never departed from the conviction that mankind could not do without it. He was not a handsome person, but rectitude, geniality and frankness gave lustre to his countenance. Whether he dealt with the British Government, with the communalists or with the other adversaries of his convictions and beliefs, he always held aloft the olive branch which never withered in his hands. The world may not see the like of Mahatma Gandhi again. Both to us, the people of India, and to those of other lands, he will always live, to borrow G. M. Trevelyan's words of tribute to Garibaldi, "as the incarnate symbol of two passions, not likely soon to die out of the world, the love of country and the love of freedom, kept pure by the one thing that can tame and yet not weaken them, the tenderest humanity for all mankind".

Gandhi's martyrdom did not, however, solve the problem of displaced persons. The mass insanity in the Punjab and elsewhere, that was accompanied by blood and tears, could not be cured by his sacrifice. By the middle of 1948, an estimated 5½ million non-Muslims moved into India from West Pakistan, while a similar number of Muslims left this country to seek refuge in the new Dominion. Hundreds of thousands of people were reduced to total destitution and most of them were forced to start their careers anew. According to the Indian Government's estimate, property worth Rs. 500 crores was left behind by non-Muslims in West Pakistan, while the corresponding figure of Muslim losses in India is put at Rs. 100 crores. The Indian authorities claim that the settlement of the displaced persons from West Pakistan and the payment of compensation to them is now practically over.*

Leaders like Master Tara Singh clearly saw that an intolerable burden would be imposed on India's resources in settling the displaced persons from Pakistan. The Sikh leader, therefore, urged that there should be an exchange of lands and houses between the uprooted non-Muslims from Pakistan and the Muslims of India. Complaining that Gandhi and Nehru refused to countenance any such plan, Master Tara Singh said: "If the Muslims stay and hold the land in that part of Uttar Pradesh and Delhi adjacent to the Punjab and Delhi, half of

* This subject will be discussed further in another chapter.

the Hindus and Sikhs who have been turned out of Western Pakistan, Sind, Baluchistan and the N.-W. Frontier Province will perish for want of land to earn their livelihood."

Unfortunately, the refugee problem continues to plague the relations between India and Pakistan, despite the fact that its final settlement is in the best interests of both. Pakistan is, however, none too anxious to promote a lasting understanding on the issue. She claims to be and functions as an Islamic State, and allows the minorities to exercise no worthwhile rights and privileges. In fact, their share in the government of their country is less than nothing. West Pakistan has already been cleared of the minority communities and pressure is being continually exerted on the Hindus in East Pakistan so that they may also quit their hearths and homes at no distant future.

What is equally alarming is the fact that there has been a concerted infiltration of the Pakistani Muslims into Assam on a large scale. Official estimates of the number of infiltrators are conservative and it is maintained by responsible observers that in recent years as many as 7,50,000 Pakistani Muslims have trespassed into India's eastern province, thereby grievously burdening its economy and endangering its security on account of Pakistan's open professions of friendship for China. Many discerning persons have expressed the view that the Government of India should take firm and immediate action to eject the trespassers, as any weakness and vacillation on its part now may well create a major problem for it at no distant future. Apart from the fact that Assam was included in the original partition scheme of the Muslim League, a section of the Pakistani press has been openly advocating the incorporation of this Indian province into what it grandiloquently calls Greater Pakistan. (We shall revert to this subject in another chapter.)

The second problem that faced India, soon after she attained independent nationhood related to the future of the feudatory States. The attitude of the Princes, who controlled an area of nearly 716,000 square miles, towards the new dispensation was one of ill-concealed hostility. As we saw earlier, a large number of States, besides being absurdly small and non-viable, were cess-pools of iniquity and injustice. Their continued existence had served no useful purpose except to meet the imperial necessity of Britain in India. Many of the princes were

notoriously irresponsible in their behaviour. The Maharaja of Alwar, to add to the examples given in an earlier chapter, besides being insanely proud, was an unmitigated sadist. He was also an exemplar in eccentricity and proved his worthiness to this dubious distinction by telegraphing to a friend that he could not keep his appointment in Bombay because he had missed, not the usual train, but his special train! Discerning Maharajas like the late Sayajirao of Baroda, shared the conviction of all right-thinking persons that the best solution to the States' problem lay in their total dissolution.

But neither the attitude of the majority of the Princes nor that of the withdrawing British Government, as portrayed in its policy statements, conduced to the adoption of any such sensible solution. The bellicose members of the Princely Order made no bones about proclaiming their determination to fight the Congress that had spear-headed the freedom movement to the bitter end if it sought to strip them of their unearned privileges and prerogatives. Theirs was not an idle threat because the armed forces of the States had been vastly increased on account of the Second World War. The Nawab of Bhopal, who took the lead in attempting to disrupt their loyalty to their motherland, left Mountbatten in no doubt that he "abhorred Congress" and that "he would have nothing to do with a Congress-dominated India".⁶

His Highness was indeed an indefatigable worker in the cause of India's division and strove to the utmost to create a "third force" so that the country could be parcelled out into Pakistan, Rajasthan and a residual India. He flagrantly misused his position as Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes by incessantly intriguing with the Muslim League and the Political Department of the Government of India, the latter being presided over by Sir Conrad Corfield. Writing about the ruler of Bhopal, Alan Campbell-Johnson, whose knowledge of the happenings of those days was intimate and first-hand, says: "As the ablest Moslem Prince, I would guess he is not averse to playing an important role in the higher politics of Pakistan. He has for some time been Jinnah's closest adviser. Unhappily, for him, his State is predominantly Hindu and in the heart of Indian

⁶ *The Last Days of the British Raj*, Leonard Mosley, p. 159.

territory.”⁷ Sardar Patel, who had been closely watching his activities, was both vexed and angry at the Nawab’s anti-national manoeuvres.

There were, of course, other princes who toyed with the idea of cherishing their illusory sovereignty at the cost of their motherland. The young and hare-brained Maharaja of Jodhpur and his accomplice from Jaisalmer, both of whose States flanked Pakistan, met Jinnah secretly in order to discuss the terms of their accession to the wrong Dominion. Jinnah was overjoyed at the prospect of gathering a mighty windfall in his lap. Handing a blank sheet of paper to the immature ruler of Jodhpur, the League leader said: “Write your terms on that, your Highness, and I will sign them.”⁸ Nothing, however, came out of these dangerous moves, thanks to the vigilance of Sardar Patel and his able Secretary, V. P. Menon, and to the subsequent realisation by the erring princes themselves of the enormity of their actions.

Jinnah, who had begun his career as an uncompromising adherent of constitutional principles and proprieties, showed an amazing resilience in his political convictions in the evening of his life, especially when he became aware of his destiny. There was a complete lack of consistency and of principles in his attitude to the accession of the Princely States to either Dominion. In a statement on June 17, 1947, he explained his position on the issue in these explicit terms: “Constitutionally and legally, the Indian States will be independent sovereign States on the termination of (British) Paramountcy and they will be free to decide for themselves to adopt any course they like; it is open to them to join the Indian Constituent Assembly or the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, or decide to remain independent.” Apart from the patent untenability of the assertion that the States were sovereign entities, his dictum that they were untrammelled in cherishing their so-called independence in isolation was plainly subversive of the very existence of India. His thesis that the princes in fact represented the States gave a true indication of his political faith as did his contention that their assent was all that was necessary to validate the accession of their principalities to either Dominion. Both these points of

⁷ *Mission with Mountbatten*, Alan Campbell-Johnson, p. 147.

⁸ *The Last Days of the British Raj*, Leonard Mosley, p. 177.

view were opposed to reason and equity and to the Congress doctrine that the ultimate arbiters of the States' destiny were their people.

The fact that expediency and opportunism rather than basic political and moral principles guided Jinnah's actions in those critical times is borne out by his attitude towards the above-mentioned Rajput States and towards the States of Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir. He had secured the partition of India on the ground that the Hindus and Muslims were two different "nations" and yet he attempted to win the adhesion of the Hindu States of Jodhpur and Jaisalmer to Pakistan. He sought justification for this *volte face* by urging that the rulers were free to accede to either country. He applied the same logic to Junagadh, despite the fact that 85 per cent of its population consisted of non-Muslims and in spite of the State not being geographically contiguous to Pakistan. The reason for his astonishing attitude was that the ruler of this principality, the eccentric, Sir Mahabatkhan Rasulkhanji, happened to be a Muslim.

The founder of Pakistan was, however, roused to indignation and left behind him a legacy of bitterness between the two countries when the Maharaja of Kashmir exercised the very constitutional right, so eloquently advocated by Jinnah himself and committed the destiny of his State to the care of India when its very existence was threatened by the Pakistani-instigated invaders from the North-West Frontier. Had Jinnah shown any consistency in his States' policy and exercised some patience and forbearance on the issue of Kashmir's accession, the relations between the two countries would perhaps have been different. He, however, chose to adopt the policy of "heads we win, tails you lose", with all its unfortunate consequences.

In the game of manoeuvre and subterfuge, which the Muslim League played so heartily on the issue of the States' accession, it found a valuable and formidable ally in the Political Department of the Government of India. The name of Sir Conrad Corfield, who headed the Political Department, will go down in history as the last in the series of the imperial handymen who vainly attempted to wrestle with fate. He saw in the British policy on the issue of paramountcy a welcome opportunity for trying to dissuade the Princes from joining the Indian

Union. Surprisingly, the Labour Secretary of State for India, Lord Listowell, agreed with Corfield's misinterpretation of facts and conducted direct correspondence with him on this vital issue. His action greatly strengthened the hands of the Political Adviser who told the Princes that his interpretation of the Indian Independence Bill was not just his own but also that of the Secretary of State. Corfield saw to it that all incriminating documents about the Princes and about the shady transactions of the Political Department were duly consigned to flames. Some four tons of papers concerning this benighted fraternity were duly burnt, while certain others were taken to London to be lodged in the imperial archives.⁹ Nehru was furious and declared: "I charge the Political Department and Sir Conrad Corfield particularly with misfeasance. I consider that a judicial enquiry at the highest level into their actions is necessary." Corfield was eventually sent home.

Unfortunately, the policy declarations of the British Government were least helpful in ensuring the States' peaceful integration into India's larger unity. It was Linlithgow's vacillation and hesitancy that had frustrated his desire to bring the States into an all-India federation under the Act of 1935. The Cripps Mission of 1942 made no attempt to define the position of the princes under the dispensation envisaged by it and contented itself with the declaration that, whether a State adhered to the new constitution or not, it would be "necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as they may be required in the new situation".¹⁰ The Cabinet Mission's Memorandum of May 12, 1946, handed over to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes on the 22nd of that month, makes even stranger reading.

Calling attention to the fact that the transfer of power to India would necessitate the termination of the relationship that had so long subsisted between the States and the British Crown, the Memorandum went on to propound the astonishing thesis that paramountcy could neither be retained by the Crown nor transferred to the new Government. Individuals like Corfield saw in such a thesis a convenient pretext for thwarting

⁹ Ibid, p. 163.

¹⁰ *White Paper on Indian States*, Government of India Publication, 1950, p. 27.

India's unity, but the authors of the document were actuated by no such evil intentions. In fact, they were the helpless victims of the past policies of the British Government. The Butler Committee, which had no hesitation in rejecting the princely contention that they had been independent sovereigns before entering into political relations with the East India Company, was most forthcoming in conceding their equally preposterous assertion that the relations of the States were, not with the Government of India for the time being, but with the distant Crown of England. At the time of its withdrawal from India, the British Power found it less embarrassing to leave the myth relating to paramountcy obligations as it was rather than explode it. No right-thinking person in India or elsewhere could, however, countenance such an impossible proposition. It was asked by what logic a Government that inherited the sovereignty of British India could be precluded from assuming tutelary obligations towards the States. V. P. Menon did not mince words when he said that Britain rendered the greatest disservice to both India and the princes by her illogical and unrealistic definition of the rights and obligations of paramountcy.¹¹

Such was the situation when Sardar Patel took charge of the States' Ministry in July 1947. Discerning persons like Sir Archibald Nye, Governor of Madras and later Britain's first High Commissioner in India, felt that the States' problem was fraught with trouble of "incalculable dimensions". The imperative need for their integration was emphasized by men like Professor Coupland who said that "an India deprived of the States would have lost all coherence". Their apprehensions were not unfounded because, apart from the secret machinations of many princes, there were others, belonging both to big and small States, who openly proclaimed their determination to remain independent. No less a person than Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, an eminent lawyer, scholar and administrator, considered it perfectly reasonable to assert in his capacity as the Dewan of Travancore that, as an "independent" entity, his State would be free to deal with "any government in the world". It is small wonder that the pretensions of the Nizam of Hyderabad exceeded all bounds

¹¹ *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, V. P. Menon, Orient Longmans, 1956, p. 94.

of reason and played no small part in hastening his downfall, as we shall see presently.

A shrewd judge of men and things, Sardar Patel saw the danger of brandishing the big stick against the princes, especially when the Central Government was still weak and distracted. He adopted the most sensible and statesmanlike course of appealing to their nobler sentiments and asked them to join the Constituent Assembly so that they and their representatives could take part in the historic task of framing a democratic constitution for free India. He did not demand much sacrifice from them and pleaded that they should accede to the Indian Union only on three subjects, namely, Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications,—subjects over which they had at no time exercised any jurisdiction under the British dispensation. His appeal met with a magnificent response and, with the representatives of the States of Baroda, Bikaner, Cochin, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Patiala and Rewa taking their place in the Constituent Assembly on April 18, 1947, the backbone of the separatists was virtually broken.

The Sardar consolidated his gains by his famous exhortation of July 5, 1947, to the Princely Order. Making a liberal use of Abraham Lincoln's noble phrases, he pleaded with the States' rulers for a change of heart and for a frank recognition of the "compulsive logic of mutual interests". His appeal was followed by that of Mountbatten. Addressing a special session of the Chamber of Princes on July 25, the Crown Representative reminded his audience that the best security for the princes lay in their quick accession to the right Dominion. By August 15, all the States, except Hyderabad, Kashmir and Junagadh, had signed the Instruments of Accession besides Standstill Agreements, designed to maintain the *status quo* until permanent arrangements, regulating the relations between the States and the Indian Union, could be made. India should record with gratitude the great services rendered by rulers like Maharaja Sir Sadul Singh of Bikaner and the Maharaja of Patiala in defeating the designs of the disruptionists by their patriotic stand. Nor can we forget that, despite his extravagance and rashness, the ex-Maharaja of Baroda was the first ruler to sign the Instrument of Accession.

What followed may well be described as a marvel in modern history. Prudence and patriotism combined in inspiring among the majority of Princes a sense of realism and an awareness of the fact that their future as reactionaries and obscurantists was doomed in the absence of the protecting hand of the British Government. The three-fold process of assimilation, centralisation and unification of the States began with the merger of small and isolated units, incapable of sustaining modern administrations of their own, into the neighbouring provinces. By this means, 216 States, embracing an area of 108,739 square miles, were wiped out of the country's political map, the feudatory States of Orissa and Chhatisgarh being the first to submit to the great mopping up operations. The second stage comprised the conversion of a number of principalities into Centrally-administered areas. Some of them were important States such as Bhopal, Kutch and Manipur.

The last stage was the formation of a number of unions of States, whose governments were allowed to be presided over by Rajpramukhs. The leader and first model for such amalgamated principalities was the United States of Saurashtra, which embraced as many as 222 States and Estates of Kathiawar. The other united States of this kind were those of Madhya Bharat, the United States of Rajasthan; Patiala and East Punjab States Union, and the United State of Travancore and Cochin. Without any fanfare of trumpets and without shedding even a drop of blood, the great Minister, Sardar Patel, ensured the absorption and assimilation of a multitude of principalities whose continued existence would undoubtedly have gravely undermined India's national solidarity and economic progress.

When the Constitution of free India came into force in January 1950, the country's territories were administratively divided into Part A, Part B and Part C States, the first comprising the former British Indian provinces, with some accretions from the small feudatory principalities. Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Bharat, Mysore, Patiala and East Punjab States Union, Rajasthan, Saurashtra and Travancore-Cochin formed Part B States, while the Centrally-administered units were nine in number. The arrangement was by no means ideal, but its greatest virtue lay in the fact that it effectively solved the vexed problem of princely States.

India owes a deep and abiding debt of gratitude to Sardar Patel for accomplishing this silent revolution. At the time, neither he nor the Government possessed either the prestige or the instrumentalities of paramountcy which the British Power in India had enjoyed in such abundance. And yet he succeeded in his great undertaking with astonishing speed and smoothness. Short and solidly-built, the Sardar was indeed a heroic figure who was endowed with a will and a determination that knew no defeat or discomfiture. His stern exterior was a mere mask that concealed a truly kind and generous heart. Those that had worked with him, either as his colleagues or as his subordinates, go into raptures when describing his many amiable qualities. He gave them his unbounded confidence so that they could set about their tasks, however onerous, with the certainty that their chief was solidly behind them. The Sardar was a realist *par excellence* and he gave signal proofs of this rare quality on three major issues, namely, the partition of India, the assimilation of the princely States, and the acceptance of Dominion Status for free India. He was in many ways different from his political chief and comrade, Nehru, whose uncompromising adherence to certain policies and programmes, despite the need for adjustment and compromise, and whose indecisions sometimes cost the country dearly. It was India's great misfortune that power came to the Sardar at the time of evening prayer. He died on December 15, 1950, at the age of 76, leaving many thinking persons to wonder what the course of India's history would have been had he been vouchsafed ten more years of active life.

It was indeed fortunate that the nettle of Junagadh and Hyderabad was grasped during the life-time of the Sardar. No principal Government worth the name could possibly ignore the audacity of the Nawab of Junagadh. A man excessively addicted to dogs and wives could not make an efficient or wise ruler. He readily responded to Jinnah's exhortation that he should "keep out" of the Indian Union "under any circumstances until August 15" and showed the same alacrity in allowing himself to be led by his new Prime Minister, Sir Shah Nawaz Khan Bhutto, a Muslim League politician from Sind. Despite the fact that his State was not contiguous to Pakistan, which could be approached only through the sea, the Nawab opted for that

Dominion and adopted many measures of coercion which forced the non-Muslim inhabitants of his State to leave their homes in their thousands. The aim of the trio was to perpetuate the hegemony of the Muslim minority in Junagadh in order to ensure, to quote Bhutto, the protection of "Islam and the Muslims of Kathiawar". Jinnah promised to send to the assistance of the State seven companies of Pakistan Reserve Police in order to gain these ends.¹² The intrigues of the Nawab and the aggressive designs of his mentors from distant Pakistan, however, went hopelessly awry, following the Indian Government's timely action. The Nawab eventually found asylum at Karachi, whither he went with a surfeit of women and canine companions. The principality of Junagadh and its two feudatories were merged into the Indian Union in response to the wishes of their people ascertained through a referendum held in February 1948.

The attitude of the Indian Government towards Hyderabad was one of generosity and for some time it closely resembled appeasement. Seventh in the line of the Asafjahi dynasty, Mir Usman Ali Khan, the Nizam, behaved and functioned like a medieval autocrat. He was a total stranger to his people, the majority of whom belonged to three distinct linguistic groups, and attained notoriety as a close-fisted Croesus who preferred to adorn himself with sack-cloth. Pampered by the British Government, he was awarded in 1918 the title of His Exalted Highness, which encouraged him to believe that he was distinct from the other members of the Princely Order. Lord Reading's memorable snub of March 1926 had not cured the Nizam of the obsession about his alleged independent sovereignty. On the contrary, British withdrawal from India helped to aggravate it. The fact that Mountbatten himself conducted the negotiations made no difference to his intransigence.

The Nizam flatly rejected the Indian Government's modest suggestion for Hyderabad's accession on three subjects, namely, Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications, over which he had not exercised any jurisdiction before. After a good deal of humming and hawing and in a spirit of condescension, he entered into a Standstill Agreement with the Indian Government on November 29, 1947, tenable for a period of one year. In retrospect, the document makes astounding reading and reveals

¹² Ibid, p. 130.

how India was willing to surrender to him all along the line. Following the Agreement, all Indian troops stationed in the State were withdrawn, thus giving the Nizam's army, the police force and the militarized Razakar marauders under Kasim Razvi's leadership, complete control over the helpless civilian population there. As if this was not enough, the Indian Government bound itself to abdicate the paramountcy rights which the former regime had exercised over Hyderabad with such devastating effect. By agreeing to receive the Nizam's agent in Delhi and to send its own to Hyderabad, it virtually conceded that it was dealing with an equal. One more blow was delivered at India's prestige by the stipulation that any dispute between the two parties relating to the terms of the Agreement should be referred to arbitration.¹³

But the Nizam was still dissatisfied! Sir Walter Moncton, his Constitutional Adviser, the Nawab of Chhatari and Sir Sultan Ahmed, were all genuinely interested in his cause, but even they discovered before long that his ambitions were much too fantastic to find any reasonable accommodation. During the Cripps negotiations, his representative, the Nawab of Chhatari, had asked for the retrocession of all the territories that had been ceded by Hyderabad to the East India Company and had, in addition, demanded an outlet to the sea, the port of his choice being Goa! The abrogation of British suzerainty over him had vastly whetted his appetite for territories.

It has been suggested by some of the defenders of the Nizam that he was a victim of unfavourable circumstances and that he had in fact become His Exhausted Highness by the time Mir Laik Ali assumed the Premiership of the State and the Razakars established their ascendancy in the streets of Hyderabad and elsewhere. But impartial testimony does not support this contention. Besides being mentally alert and in full command of his faculties, he impressed a discerning foreigner as being "arrogant and narrow" and "formidable on his home ground". In fact, he had the courage to tell off no less a person than Jinnah whom he shouted down when the two men met.¹⁴

Mir Usman Ali Khan was, therefore, neither a fool nor a spent force when he defied the Indian Government. He presumably

¹³ *White Paper on Hyderabad: Supplement*, Government of India Press, 1948, p. 15.

¹⁴ *My Public Life*, Sir Mirza M. Ismail, G. Allen & Unwin, 1954, pp. 98, 99.

acted in the belief that his defiance would receive the support not only of Indian Muslims but also of Pakistan. Despite the rupture in his relations with Jinnah, his contacts with Karachi were close and continuous. The Government of Pakistan was given a loan of Rs. 20 crores, while feverish military preparations were made inside the State to settle the dispute with India by a trial of strength. Large sums of money, totalling some Rs. 22 crores, were spent on arms and ammunition and on propagating falsehoods about India and her leaders. An Englishman was entrusted with the mission of negotiating the purchase of Goa for Hyderabad. Jinnah, the head of a foreign Government, ignored international proprieties when he declared on June 1, 1948, that the Nizam's dominion was "an independent State" and that "not only the Muslims of Pakistan but Muslims all the world over fully sympathise with Hyderabad in its struggle".

Jinnah did not, however, consider it necessary to explain what precisely the Nizam was "struggling" for if not to sustain his own obsolete prerogatives and to give protection to what an influential British Quarterly called, "an extreme Muslim faction desperately fearful for their inherited power over the Hindu majority". Thus, military action alone and not mere negotiations, could solve the Hyderabad problem. And when on September 13, 1948, the Indian troops marched into Hyderabad under the command of Major-General Chaudhuri, the Nizam discovered to his dismay that all his warlike preparations were of no avail. The much-boasted Razakars and their semi-demented leader, Razvi,* ran away in all directions as fast as their legs could carry them. Finding that submission was the better part of valour, the Hyderabad Army surrendered on the evening of September 17 so that the whole operation against the Nizam barely lasted 108 hours. These happenings merely confirmed the well-known historical fact that Hyderabad would never have survived as a State without British protection. Shorn of all power and privilege, disillusioned and growing more and more decrepit, the Nizam lives on, clinging desperately to his uncounted hoards.

The division of the country's administrative units into three distinct categories could not be a satisfactory arrangement. Public

* Razvi was soon arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. He was released a few years ago and is now living in obscurity in Karachi.

opinion in Parts B and C States regarded the disposition as the virtual negation of the principle of equal rights and opportunities guaranteed by the Constitution to all the inhabitants of the country. They looked upon the institution of Rajpramukh as an anachronism and asked for its abolition. They argued with considerable force that the Indian Union should not consist of a multitude of disparate units but a sizeable number having equal status and a uniform relationship with the Centre. The prospects for administrative reorganisation on the desired lines became bright following the growing demand for linguistic provinces. The Government of India which, as we shall see later, was at first none too enthusiastic about the suggestion, felt constrained to appoint a Commission to recommend the reorganisation of the existing administrative units primarily on the principle of linguistic homogeneity. Appointed in December 1953, the States Reorganisation Commission, consisting of three eminent Indians—S. Fazl Ali, Chairman, Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, and the late Sardar K. M. Panikkar—urged that, no matter on what principles the States were reorganised, the change should not lead to regional particularism and result in inter-State conflicts.¹⁵

The present administrative map of India is fairly compact and consists of fifteen States, including Jammu and Kashmir.* In addition, there are eleven small units which are directly administered by the Union Government, such an arrangement being called for by political, strategic and other special considerations. The reclaimed foreign enclaves have been placed in the second category. The option as to their permanent disposition has been left entirely to their people.

Lord and Lady Mountbatten did not stay in India long enough to witness the completion of the historic process of the country's integration, but the regime of Mountbatten, though brief, will remain memorable, not merely because he was instrumental in effecting the transfer of power, but because both he and his wife identified themselves with the Indian cause with such understanding and thoroughness that they ceased to be regarded as foreigners by the people of this country. From the historical

¹⁵ *Report of the States Reorganisation Commission*, Government of India Press, 1955, p. 39.

* The Indo-Pakistan dispute on the future of Kashmir will be discussed in another chapter.

point of view also, it is of inestimable value that Mountbatten remained at the helm of Indian affairs till June 1948, that is, for ten months after the country's independence. Since he took a leading part in trying to compose the growing differences between India and Pakistan, historians not well-disposed towards the former cannot have their own way in presenting facts. By his frankness, his innate nobility and his enthusiasm for right causes, this scion of royal lineage proved the essential soundness of the old lesson of history, namely, that one honest friend is far better than an army of mere well-wishers. He also showed that Britain is most powerful when she is not an Empire but a friend and an equal.

Of Lady Mountbatten, whose sudden death in February 1960 was deeply mourned in India, it can be truly said that she was a sister of mercy *par excellence*. She was indeed the Florence Nightingale of India, ever so ready to wipe the tears of displaced women and children, thousands of whom derived genuine comfort and consolation from her presence and ministrations. She was, to use Lord Ismay's words, "utterly dedicated, completely indefatigable and uniquely experienced". India cherishes the memory of this courageous and kind-hearted lady.

Another major achievement of India, soon after her independence was the adoption of a democratic constitution for the government of the country. A heavy responsibility lay on the shoulders of the constitution-makers to draw up a scheme that combined the guarantee of democratic freedom with social justice. The Constituent Assembly, which held its first session on December 1946, laboured hard in that direction. The new Constitution was enacted on November 26, 1949, and was inaugurated with due solemnity on January 26, 1950, a day that has become memorable in the country's constitutional history.

The Indian Constitution of 1950 has not won universal acclaim and has been criticised as being unwieldy and cumbersome, with a plethora of "diffuse" and "superfluous" provisions, thus providing god-sent opportunities for lawyers to thrive on litigation at the cost of the community. The propriety of incorporating a whole chapter on Fundamental Rights into the Constitution is questioned, while the Directive Principles of State Policy are dismissed as a mere revised edition of the manifesto of the ruling Congress Party. It is further maintained that Article 19, envisag-

ing limitations on the enjoyment of certain freedoms by the citizen, constitutes the negation of the very principles underlying the exercise of Fundamental Rights. But it is impossible to ignore the fact that reasonable constraints on the liberty of the individual are an essential feature of every democratic system. In fact, liberty has been defined as freedom according to law.

The Constitution is certainly not perfect, but in all essentials it is extremely sound as the fundamental law of the land. Perhaps, it is somewhat old-fashioned to write into it such widely-known principles as liberty, equality and fraternity, but there is an element of heroism in a people, only lately released from long subjection to foreign rule, when they boldly and solemnly affirm their faith in those principles. Drawing as it does its inspiration from the British, the Commonwealth and the American systems of government, it is inevitable that the Indian Constitution is liberal. At the same time, its framers did not lose sight of the fact that they were legislating for a country and a people who differed so widely from their exemplars.

India's choice of the British parliamentary system of government, as opposed to the American Presidential system, was deliberate and was made after much consideration. But there has been a significant departure in the Indian system from its British model. For instance, a Minister in the Indian Parliament can go to either House and take part in its deliberations, although his right to vote is confined to that legislature to which he has been elected. No British Minister, belonging to the House of Lords, is free to go to the House of Commons for a similar purpose. Again, the Attorney-General in India is essentially a law officer, appointed by the President of the Union and charged with the responsibility of rendering legal advice to the Government, and is untrammelled either by personal or party considerations in the performance of his duties. In contrast, his counterpart in Britain is a member of the Cabinet and, however high-minded and independent he may be, he cannot entirely divest himself of the feeling that he has to toe the line of the party in power to which he owes his position. To give one more example, the Election Commission in India is an independent body and not a creature either of the Parliament or of the Executive. Such a dispensation greatly helps in ensuring fair, free and impartial elections. The three general elections since independ-

ence and the numerous by-elections have proved the essential soundness of this arrangement. In Britain the responsibility for holding the elections rests with the Parliament.¹⁶

The framers of the Constitution saw that the paramount need of the country was, as it will be for as long as one can see into the future, a strong central authority. They accordingly felt that any government that came into existence under the new dispensation should be able to provide a real sense of unity and direction to the Indian people. Towards this end, the Government of India is endowed with a plenitude of powers, while at the same time ensuring that the constituent States enjoy a real measure of internal autonomy. India is, therefore, a unitary State, with only subsidiary federal features. One has only to enumerate the powers vested in the Union Government in order to see how positively centralist the Indian system is.

The principal government has absolute control over the country's defence, foreign affairs and communications. The Parliament, the legislative organ of the Union, can make laws for the whole of India and no law so made can be challenged by the States. The Centre enjoys exclusive jurisdiction over such important subjects as declaration of war and peace, citizenship, extradition, currency and coinage and Public Service Commission for recruitment to the all-India services. In addition, it exercises large powers of taxation and the enormous annual grants which it makes to the States, either as their share from the Central revenues or as a contribution to their developmental schemes, gives it a measure of strength which no State can ignore with impunity. The establishment of the Planning Commission to formulate the five-year plans and the institution of the National Development Council, consisting, among others, of the Chief Ministers of the States, has further stimulated the tendency towards centralisation.

Besides being clothed with unshared powers over a wide field, enumerated in the Union List, the Centre is given concurrent jurisdiction over a number of other subjects. As in the United States and Australia, the concurrent field provided in the Indian

¹⁶ The comparison is intended merely to indicate the points of departure between the two systems. Indeed, as Lord Morrison rightly claims, the British sense of fair-play is never more strongly in evidence than in an election. (*Herbert Morrison: An Autobiography* by Lord Morrison of Lambeth, Oldhams, p. 93.)

Constitution is extensive. Safeguards against possible conflicts over jurisdiction between the principal authority and the regional governments have been laid down by prescribing that the will of the Centre should prevail. Again, all powers not specifically mentioned in the Constitution, that is to say, all residuary powers are vested in the Centre. We have thus in India a principal government whose paramountcy over the States is most pronounced. The future security and stability of the country will greatly depend on how well and wisely the men at the helm make use of these powers. Whatever may be one's own views on the desirability or otherwise of allowing the growth of a highly centralised authority in the country, the fact that the tendency in America is in that direction is not without significance.¹⁷ The creation of a strong directing authority need not necessarily lead to the whole country being reduced to a single, dull and drab pattern.

The Founding Fathers were wise in opting for the parliamentary system and in creating a truly national legislature at the Centre. Based on adult franchise, the Indian Parliament is the real representative of the broad masses of the people, besides being the tribune of free speech and an arena for the clash of intellects. Times have changed a good deal since the introduction of the Morley-Minto Reforms when, and even much later, the Indian legislatures were the preserve of the leisured classes nurtured in the traditions of gradualness, privilege and property.

The framers of the new Constitution did not, therefore, consider it necessary to maintain the old sharp distinction between the Upper House and the Lower House. The Council of States, called the Rajya Sabha, is nearly as full-fledged a legislative body as the House of the People, known as the Lok Sabha. The only significant legislative disability of the Rajya Sabha is that no Money Bills can be introduced in it. Nor is the mode of election to the two Houses the same. Because of the broad basis on which its members are elected, the Lok Sabha is rightly looked upon as India's House of Commons. The propriety of having an Upper House has been widely discussed and, although few

¹⁷ Prof. D. W. Brogan writes: "American constitutional history has been one long process of transferring the more important functions of government from the States to the Union. This process has not been halted, but has not been notably accelerated either" (*The American Political System*, D. W. Brogan, 1948, p. xiii).

would now venture to be as dogmatic as Sir Henry Maine was when he said that almost any Second Chamber was better than none, nearly all important countries have felt the need for such an institution. Perhaps, the best recommendation for its continued existence is that it not only conforms to the force of tradition and serves as a brake on hasty and impulsive measures by the Lower House, but also furnishes opportunities for talented men and experts to find a place in the national legislature through nomination. Experience with the Rajya Sabha for nearly fifteen years has shown that it is not a superfluous body.

The value of the Parliament in the life of India cannot be underestimated, but, as in many other countries with parliamentary institutions, real power is steadily going into the hands of the executive. Apart from the fact that the business of administering a modern State is becoming increasingly complex, the task is even more difficult in the case of a vast and overpopulated country like India which has been making strenuous efforts to become a Great Power by shedding its backwardness. The abilities or the qualifications of individual members of Parliament have not the slightest influence on the growth of the executive power.¹⁸ The following observations of a writer are as relevant to India as they are to any other democratically governed country. He says: "Parliament becomes year by year less of a governing council and more of a censor of executive acts. Even in the sphere of legislation its function is increasingly to define the orbit of legislative activity upon a topic, leaving the detailed working out of the programme to the appropriate department, which, not infrequently, possesses the power to amend the Act by which legislative power is conferred upon it."¹⁹

Thus, although the Parliament enjoys almost unlimited powers of legislation, as it should, and the Supreme Court ensures strict adherence to the law of the land, it is the executive

¹⁸ Basing its study on "Who's Who—1962", published by the Lok Sabha, *The Eastern Economist* for January 25, 1963, says that, as a body, the M.P.s of this House appear to be "a highly educated lot". According to this journal, nearly four out of five of them have had post-matriculation education. 132 out of a total of 487 members are political and social workers, while 114 belong to the agricultural population. Lawyers comprise the third largest group and number 102. Industrialists and businessmen have made a combined contribution of 53 members, while journalists are 35 in number. Doctors, engineers and teachers have still to mobilize their strength in order to make their presence felt in the legislature.

¹⁹ *The Twilight of the Common Law*, Prof. G. W. Keeton (*The Nineteenth Century*, April 1949).

that holds and exercises the substance of power. And since the Cabinet is the corner-stone of the executive, it is its members, and more particularly the Prime Minister and a few other senior ministers, who exercise real influence over the counsels of the nation. Thanks to such modern developments, the traditional conception about the cabinet system, as described by G. M. Trevelyan, for example, calls for radical modification.

Such a revision of ideas was even more necessary in the case of India where the presence of Nehru as Prime Minister had rendered almost every political personage and institution in the country relatively unimportant when ranged against his stature and prestige. In fact, it was said that, thanks to his dominant position, the Ministry at the Centre was a cabinet of ciphers! The Constitution certainly does not envisage such a disposition, for Article 75(3) expressly lays down that "the Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the People" or the Lok Sabha, as it is now called. The President of the Union, in whose name the country is administered, can, of course, play a great part in ensuring that the Cabinet does not become the tool of any person, but he himself should be an outstanding man to bring this about. Like the British monarch, he can exercise considerable influence on the policy of the Government. Explaining the role of the President under the Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar told the Constituent Assembly on November 4, 1948: "He (the President) is the head of the State but not of the executive. He represents the nation but does not rule the nation. He is the symbol of the nation."

We have thus at the Centre a President, a bi-cameral legislature, a Council of Ministers and a Supreme Court,—all of which constitute the Union Government. The constitutional set-up in the provinces, now called States, is largely derived from the Act of 1935, without its obnoxious provisions. The measure of autonomy vouchsafed to them is substantial. The State List, comprising the subjects over which they have jurisdiction, includes public order, police, administration of justice, local government, public health, education, land revenue, agriculture, forests, levy of certain types of taxes, and many other items of vital importance.

Indeed, some experts like Mehr Chand Mahajan, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, believe that the degree

of autonomy granted to the regional governments is far in excess of the needs of national unity.²⁰ But no State can have the courage to function irresponsibly either in its domestic concerns or in its relations with other States and the Centre if it is brought home to it that the constitutional powers vested in the Union Government and in the Governor are intended to be strictly enforced. The Governor of a State under the present dispensation is not an autocrat, but the sorry spectacle of groupism and disunity, which we find among the ministries in many States, can be avoided if this dignitary exercises his constitutional powers with courage and determination. So far, the Governors have functioned mostly as ornaments instead of fulfilling their constitutional responsibilities as the guardians of democratic and efficient government. Nehru was too much of a democrat to impose the will of the Centre on the constituent units even when the necessities of the case demanded it and even when such a course of action had the sanction of the Constitution. But the undesirable consequences of his Government's inaction were largely mitigated by his towering personality which no Minister or State Government ventured to ignore. With Nehru gone, it is necessary that the Centre should become more assertive in its relations with the States and ensure that the Governors justify their position in the Constitution.

These are the broad outlines of the Indian Constitution. Its greatest merit consists in the fact that it is pre-eminently an Indian statute and not a derivative of either an Act of British Parliament or of the Statute of Westminster. The fact that it has borrowed freely from other constitutions and even from the Act of 1935 does not detract from its value as a national product. The abolition of the vicious system of communal representation, which was at the root of India's political ills in the pre-independence period, is a conclusive proof of the vision and boldness with which the Founding Fathers approached their responsibilities. Again, the introduction of adult franchise is a solemn affirmation of their faith in the intelligence and good sense of the common man.

Three general elections have been held since the inauguration of the Constitution. They have totally disproved the grim forecasts of the prophets of gloom that the enfranchisement of a vast

²⁰ Two articles published in *The Hindu* dated October 24 and 27, 1959.

mass of humanity, mostly illiterate and easily inflammable, is an invitation to violence and chaos. The specially-constituted Election Commission, whose ability and impartiality in conducting the elections on such a gigantic scale have won the admiration of all, has paid a warm tribute to the understanding and shrewdness of the common man, thus confirming the time-honoured truth that mere literacy, however important in itself, cannot be a substitute for commonsense.

Before independence, barely 14 per cent of the population was enfranchised, but, under the new dispensation, almost the entire adult population has acquired the right to vote. Free India's first general elections were held in 1951-52 and involved the enrolment of 173 million voters.²¹ The second general elections, held in 1957, were on a much bigger scale and embraced 193.6 million voters. Of them, 92 million cast their votes for elections to the Parliamentary constituencies. The percentage of the poll was 47.54 compared to 51.15 in the first general elections. For the Assembly seats, the percentage was 48.23. The magnitude of the third general elections, held in 1962, was even more impressive. 114 million people exercised their franchise with an admirable awareness of their responsibility. The percentage of the poll for the Lok Sabha constituencies was 52.96.

It is indeed impossible to withhold our admiration from the common man for the enthusiasm and discipline displayed by him in exercising his newly-gained political right. In contrast, a good number of persons, belonging to the monied and the white-collared classes, do not fancy the elections at all, partly on the ground that it is beneath their dignity to rub shoulders with the "common voter" and partly because they regard it as a mere waste of time to go to the polling booths, especially when the right to vote which they are called upon to exercise is shared by so many millions. It is from these classes that we hear the most unsparing criticism of adult franchise.

The so-called common man, whose abilities they hopelessly underrate, does not need to be told where his best interests lie. The fact that during the general elections of 1962 a good number of Congress stalwarts, including ministers and party bosses, were routed in many parts of the country, and more especially in those

²¹ *Report on the First General Elections in India, 1951-52*, Vol. I, General, Election Commission, 1955, p. 187.

regions where party strife was rife, is sufficient evidence to show that the voter cannot be taken for granted. The provision of easily recognizable symbols has vastly solved the problem of the illiterate voter in exercising his franchise. The pair of yoked bullocks of the Congress Party, the hut of the Praja Socialist Party, the ears of corn and the sickle of the Communist Party, and the lamp with a burning wick (*deepa*) of the All-India Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the four leading aspirants to governmental power, are pictorial representations that have become familiar throughout the country.

At the same time, experience with the three general elections has demonstrated that the general voter, and more particularly the one hailing from the villages, is more concerned with his immediate problems than with those of the country as a whole. Sometimes a dissatisfied voter gives expression to his or her feelings in strange ways. For instance, the soliloquy of an old woman in the polling booth of a Madras constituency was as revealing as it was diverting. Presumably, addressing the ballot box, she said: "In these days, you are the king-maker and the minister-maker. Do grant us more and cheaper rice as in the old days." In the same State, another voter insisted on voting for the Election Commissioner alone and not for any party candidate! His reason was that, "all these parties have been harassing me with their election propaganda for over a month".²² Such incidents, in addition to their being amusing, underline the fact that even the lowliest person in India has begun to take his political right seriously. "The degree of political maturity," says the Election Commission, "displayed by the electorate even in many backward areas has indeed astonished many impartial observers and students of politics."²³

The aim of free India is not merely to secure political equality to the common man, which he has now obtained through adult suffrage, but also to enfranchise him economically. The Constitution has imposed on the State an obligation to promote the welfare of the people of the country "by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of national life". Ignorance, disease and poverty have long been

²² *Report on the Second General Elections in India, 1957*, Vol. I, General, Election Commission, 1959, pp. 224-25.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 236.

the bane of India's national life and it is rightly held that this triple curse cannot be destroyed merely through political awakening but by deliberate economic planning. Towards this end, three five-year plans, each bigger than its predecessor, have been launched, with the expectation that in the years to come the common man will be able to lead a richer and a more purposeful life. Many more such plans are to follow.

Since this subject will be discussed separately in another chapter, it is sufficient to indicate here the planners' line of thinking. They say: "The urge to economic and social change under present conditions comes from the fact of poverty and of inequalities in income, wealth and opportunity. The elimination of poverty cannot, obviously, be achieved merely by redistributing existing wealth. Nor can a programme aiming only at raising production remove existing inequalities. The two have to be considered together; only a simultaneous advance along both these lines can create the conditions in which the community can put forth its best efforts for promoting development."²⁴ Such an endeavour, it is claimed, will lead to the establishment of what is called the socialistic pattern of society in the country. Whatever may be the precise connotation of this term, there cannot be any doubt that the need for galvanizing the Indian economy and thus advancing the material well-being of the people is great.

Apart from the importance of resources, planning demands the support of a sound administration for its success. Efficient and incorruptible administrative services are an asset of incomparable value. The exodus of the British and Muslim elements of the Indian Civil Service and of other services on the eve of the country's independence had created an almost impossible situation for the new rulers. But Sardar Patel, who was in charge of the Home Ministry, rose to the occasion and grappled with the problem with his customary sagacity and resoluteness of purpose. The Indian Civil Service, long associated in the public mind with reaction, snobbery and privilege, was abolished and its place was taken by a new cadre known as the Indian Administrative Service. The Indian I.C.S. officers that remained at their posts have, however, proved a tower of strength to the

²⁴ *The First Five Year Plan*, Planning Commission, p. 8.

new rulers in carrying out their ambitious policies and programmes.

India owes a deep debt of gratitude to these veteran civilians who have had to bear enormous responsibilities since independence. They and the members of other services were greatly heartened by the statesmanlike attitude of Sardar Patel towards them. The Indian Administrative Service, which has replaced the famous steel frame, provides officers for all the senior civilian posts except for the judiciary. Recruitment to it and to the Indian Police Service is made through all-India competitive examinations. The I.A.S. has attracted some of the most talented men in the country and the need for such able officers, animated by a spirit of dedication, will grow as the responsibilities of the Government in a welfare State increase.

These, then, are the achievements of free India. The integration of an immense displaced population into the social and economic life of the country, the dissolution of the princely States that had long been notorious as the greatest social wastelands of the East, the administrative reorganisation that followed their assimilation into India's larger unity, the adoption of a truly democratic Constitution, the inauguration of an era of economic planning, and the attempt to rehabilitate the administrative services and to transform them into efficient instruments of national service, furnish a record of achievements of which any country can be legitimately proud. And yet the image of free India, as we see it today, is not altogether pleasing. Why it is so is the subject-matter of the next chapter.

13. THE IMAGE OF FREE INDIA

THERE are many in India who sincerely desire that the image of the country should be much different from what it is today. Before independence, it was confidently hoped that, once the people became free, they would be able to march unitedly and in a spirit of comradeship towards any goal they chose to realise. The Congress was a dynamic force and, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, there was almost nothing which it could not accomplish. The spirit of nationalism, exemplified by the Congress, was both positive and purposeful. Though undoubtedly most important, British withdrawal was not the only objective in its view. It was a mass organisation pledged to the regeneration of the masses, both politically and economically. It is precisely because the common man was the major object of its care and solicitude that the Congress was able to penetrate deep into the villages and to draw its strength from him. Gandhi voiced the aspirations of the common man when he said that the rulers of free India would strive to convert "a land of sorrow into a land of plenty". The fact that it was, as it still is, a composite body harbouring the most diverse interests within its ranks, neither weakened its combative spirit nor obscured its political and social objectives.

The country owes much to this unique organisation. It is a measure of its strength and prestige that the Congress not only spear-headed the nationalist movement, but also became the competent receiver of the responsibilities of government after the British withdrawal. Most of the gains made by free India, including the preservation of the country's integrity, described at length in the last chapter, were largely due to the labours of this party. In the mighty task of national reconstruction, the burden borne by Sardar Patel and Nehru was unique. The Sardar lived only for three years after independence, but his achievements as a statesman will go down in history as monumental. The responsibilities that devolved on Nehru lasted much longer and grew in weight and complexity with the pass-

age of years. Writing about Palmerston, Bagehot said: "His personality was a power." We may make a similar observation about Nehru with truth and without exaggeration. Since 1946, when he joined the interim Government during Lord Wavell's Viceroyalty, he bore till his death on May 27, 1964, the brunt of piloting the affairs of a vast country, struggling to shed its backwardness, with remarkable patience and determination. Born in affluence, equipped with an excellent education, and endowed with a wide ranging mind, Nehru employed his rare gifts of leadership entirely in the service of his nation. His personality played no small part in preserving India's political integrity.

Continuous enjoyment of power for seventeen years has undoubtedly weakened the fibre of the Congress party. Similarly, the unrelieved cares and burdens of office had steadily deprived Nehru of what Tagore called the spring of eternal youth so that towards the end there was a marked decline in the vigour and purposefulness of his leadership. In fact, India's growing distractions that marked the closing years of Nehru's stewardship raised grave doubts in the minds of many thinking men whether it was really wise that the affairs of a vast and developing country should be allowed to be directed indefinitely by any one individual even if he was an extraordinary person.

"I have," wrote Ernest Bevin to G. D. H. Cole, "no confidence in supermen," and added "the limitations of supposedly great men are obvious."¹ Perhaps, the country's obsessional belief in the inevitability of Nehru's leadership and in the need for its indefinite continuance could have been avoided if the Congress party had remained a truly dynamic and democratic body as of old. The absence of a rival political organisation, capable of offering an effective challenge to its supremacy, probably was and still is the most important reason why it feels no compelling urge to reform itself.

The results of the three general elections bear out that the Indian voter has still to demonstrate that he can do without the Congress. Only a small section of the community has given any serious thought to the question whether it is in the lasting interests of the country that its government

¹ *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, Alan Bullock, Vol. I, Heinemann, 1960, p. 538.

should be held indefinitely by a single party, more especially when its present rulers are showing such obvious signs of decay and decrepitude. The Congress party entered the first general elections in 1951-52 with supreme confidence in its ability to win. The fact that it was called upon to face the world's largest electorate, numbering 173 million people, was to its best advantage. Backed by Nehru's unique prestige and its own impressive record in the government of the country, it was fully entitled to be returned to power. No other party could claim these advantages and none, except the Communists, had an organisation that embraced the entire country.

In the elections for the Lok Sabha, the Congress secured 45 per cent of the total votes cast and 74 per cent of the elected seats, namely, 362 out of 489. It won an absolute majority in all the State Assemblies, except in those of Madras, Orissa, PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) and Travancore-Cochin. It was, however, the largest single party in every one of them. Only in Tripura, a tiny sub-province, did it fare badly and was in fact eclipsed by the Communists. The Congress won 2,293 seats out of a total of 3,373 in the States legislatures, its nearest rival, the Communist Party of India, securing a bare 162. The gains of the Communists in the Central legislature were equally unimpressive. In the Lok Sabha, they captured 27 seats, including the two belonging to the United Front of Leftists from Travancore-Cochin.

The Congress fought the second general elections in 1957 with the same confidence in the outcome, but the results revealed that the law of diminishing returns had begun to operate. The Communists had greatly strengthened their position in Bengal and in some of the southern States, while the gross mishandling of the issue relating to the creation of a separate State for the Marathi-speaking people had led to a virtual rejection of the Congress in Maharashtra. But the supremacy of the party at the Centre remained unshaken. In a House with 494 seats, it won 371, while the Communists were able to secure only 29. The Socialists did better than on the previous occasion, the Praja-Socialist Party having secured 19 parliamentary seats. The Jan Sangh, which also aspires for a place in all-India politics, was able to send four members to the Lok Sabha as against three in the first general elections.

In the State legislatures, the Congress annexed 2,039 seats out of a total of 3,102. Excluding the independents, who numbered 271, the Communists were the second largest party. They captured 202 seats. It is true that this is a negligible number compared to that of the Congress, but the protest vote recorded in favour of the Communists was considerable. In Kerala, they wrested power from the Congress and the Praja Socialist Party and formed the first Communist ministry in the country, with E. M. S. Namboodiripad as the Chief Minister. The people of Kerala installed the Communists in power, being thoroughly disgusted with the inefficiency, the corruption and the nepotism of the previous regimes, whose infirmities were further aggravated by their instability.² The Praja-Socialist Party fared fairly well in the parliamentary elections, but yielded ground to the Communists in the States. It became obvious from the results of the second general elections that the real challenge to the Congress came from the votaries of Marxism.

In magnitude, the third general elections, held in 1962, were even more massive than the earlier ones. They saw 114 million people exercising their franchise. The Congress was again victorious, though the mandate to it from the electorate on this occasion was somewhat less decisive. Its record in the three parliamentary elections is best illustrated by the following figures. It polled 47.6 million votes in 1951-52, 57.5 million votes in 1957 and 51.5 million votes in 1962. The Communists secured 5.3 million votes in 1951-52, 10.7 million votes in 1957 and 11.4 million votes in 1962, while those won by the Praja-Socialist Party were 17.4 million in 1951-52, 12.5 million in 1957 and 7.8 million in 1962. The Socialists polled 2.5 million votes in 1957 and 2.8 million in 1962. The Jan Sangh somewhat improved its position in the last elections, having polled 7.4 million votes as against 7.1 million votes polled by it in the earlier election.

The Congress returned 361 members to the Lok Sabha, having a strength of 494, the representation of the other leading parties being: Communists 29, Praja-Socialist Party and Socialists 12 plus 6, and Jan Sangh 18. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, a Madras party pledged to separatism, improved its position

² *Report on Kerala*, B. G. Verghese, three articles published in *The Times of India*, Bombay, on August 12, 13, 14, 1958.

in Parliament by securing 7 seats as against 2 in 1957. The Swatantra Party, largely the creation of the veteran ex-Congress leader, C. Rajagopalachari, was a new-comer and won 22 seats in the Lok Sabha.

The ruling party lost ground in many States, although it did not yield the first place to its rivals anywhere. It won 1,774 seats out of a total of 3,121, its record in the previous two general elections being 2,293 out of a total of 3,373 seats in 1951-52 and 2,039 out of a total of 3,102 in 1957. The Communists were the best beneficiaries of the growing enfeeblement and distractions of the ruling party. Although they lost ground for parliamentary seats in Andhra, there was a substantial increase in their representation in the State Assembly. Their success in Kerala in the parliamentary elections was most impressive because they were able to poll 35.46 per cent of the votes cast. The percentage would be as much as 49 if the votes gained by the other leftist parties in the State were to be taken into account. The ruling Congress-P.S.P. coalition polled only 44 per cent.³ The Communists, however, suffered severe reverses in their traditional stronghold, Calcutta, but their loss was made good in the rural constituencies of Bengal. Tripura remained loyal to them by voting solidly for their candidates.

In Assam, the Hill Leaders' Conference successfully demonstrated the strength of its demand for a separate hill State. A noteworthy feature of the electoral contest in the Hindi-speaking regions was the emergence of the rightist challenge to the Congress. The Swatantra Party, the Jan Sangh and the Akali Dal, in the Punjab, all made appreciable gains, mostly at the cost of the Congress which failed to secure a majority in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. In Maharashtra, the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, which had spear-headed the agitation for a separate State for the Marathi-speaking people, found itself left high and dry once its goal was reached. The overwhelming defeat of the veteran Communist leader, S. A. Dange, in the parliamentary elections from the city of Bombay, gave a convincing demonstration of the complete rehabilitation of the Congress in the State of Maharashtra. The discomfiture of some of the shining lights of the Congress in States like the Uttar Pradesh

³ *Election Analysis (Southern Region)*, B. G. Verghese, a series of articles published in *The Times of India*, Bombay, from March 28 to April 1, 1962.

and Gujarat was a salutary indication that the voter could not be taken for granted.

Some important conclusions emerge from a study of the three general elections. Writing editorially on February 15, 1962, the *London Times* declared: "Justice has always been the first motive of political change and it is India's merit that it gives its people the chance to learn how it may be won. Amidst the dust of faction something of political consciousness is slowly emerging, and with it a sense of political responsibility among politicians and voters. India at the polls is one of the hopeful scenes in Asia." Despite these hopeful developments, there are, however, still no signs of an early termination of the system of one-party government in the country. Although the Congress is widely and bitterly assailed on almost every issue of national importance, no party has yet emerged strong enough, either by itself or in combination with like-minded parties, to offer effective opposition to it. Although not peculiar to this country, a distressing feature of the elections is the existence of a large number of independent candidates, whose success at the polls is not conducive to the growth of a sound party system. Being neither fish nor fowl, the independents are in reality a red-herring across the path of the organised parties striving to increase their representation in the popular legislatures.

In 1951-52, there were as many as 524 such political non-descripts aspiring for parliamentary seats, while their number in the last elections was 483. More than 5,000 of them contested the seats in the State Assemblies.⁴ Again, a multitude of parties, some of them professing the most amazing views on political and social questions, seek the suffrage of the voter, knowing that most of them are inherently incapable of exercising much influence on the national affairs. There were 21 parties in the Lok Sabha after the first general elections, 19 after the second elections, and 20 after the last elections. Cooperation and concerted action on the part of a medley of mutually exclusive and self-regarding groups, either inside the legislatures or outside, become almost impossible so that the regime of the party in power is virtually unshaken by whatever they say or do.

⁴ *The General Election in India*, Shriram Maheshwari, Chaitanya Publishing House, 1963, p. 61.

Today, next to the Congress, the Communists are the only disciplined and widely-organised party, with potentialities for forming an alternative government, if not in the whole of India, but at least in some States. They have a competent leadership and adequate funds, both so essential for waging an effective electoral warfare. The Communist Party of India came into existence in 1924 to change the social and political order in the country and to bring it in line with the Marxist principles and precepts. Since its establishment, the party has functioned in isolation with much consistency, except for brief periods when in the pre-independence years, it sought to make common cause with the other leftist elements in the country, especially on the labour front. By the end of 1928, it was able to capture the premier labour organisation, the All-India Trade Union Congress, and through its instrumentality succeeded in imparting considerable militancy to the industrial working class movement in the country. It has vigorously followed the well-known policy of disturbing the "placid contentment" of the masses and then propagating the message of Communism.

Its political and social tenets, promising equality of treatment and of opportunity for personal advancement, have a strong appeal to the "submerged" classes of the Indian community. It is not an accident that the industrial working class, the landless labour, the educated unemployed, and the members of other socially disfranchised classes, are among the most enthusiastic adherents of Communism. The *élite* of the party, which supplies the brain-power and the driving force, is, of course, drawn from the ranks of the intellectuals, some of whom belong to affluent families and most of whom are highly educated. The faith of these men in Communism is obsessional.

The prospects of the Communists rising to power in India depend entirely upon how the Congress and other parties, should the latter come into power, grapple with the problem of poverty. As the next chapter will show, poverty is still the outstanding fact of India's life and unless it is dealt with more thoroughly than at present, it is difficult to imagine how the Congress can expect to retain the loyalty of the masses for an indefinite period. On the basis of its past and present record, there is, however, little in the outlook of the Communist Party of India that can commend itself to right-thinking persons.

Apart from participating in desultory acts of violence and terrorism in the name of the country's freedom, the party's contribution to Indian nationalism was not only negative but positively harmful. Besides condemning the great Congress movement, led by Gandhi, as posing the "greatest threat to the victory of the Indian revolution", it made no bones about trying to weaken the popular uprising by supporting reactionary counter-measures. We read from a document, published in *Pravda* in 1930, that the Indian National Congress represented "a class organisation of the capitalists" working against the fundamental interests of the "toiling masses of our country".⁵ The tract did not, of course, explain whether anything worthwhile to relieve the misery of the "toiling masses" could ever be accomplished before achieving political freedom for the country.

The party's role during the last war was even more objectionable. It began by denouncing the war as imperialistic and ended up by becoming its ardent champion, Russia's participation in the conflict on behalf of the Allied Powers being the sole reason for its cynical *volte face*. During the war years, a prominent Communist openly alleged that the General Secretary of the Party had entered into a secret correspondence with Sir Reginald Maxwell, Home Member of the Government of India and an implacable opponent of Indian freedom, pledging his organisation's "unconditional help" in combating the Gandhian movement for the country's freedom. Patriots like Subhas Chandra Bose and his followers were characterised as "traitors" and "fifth columnists".⁶

Nor did the party consider it an enormity to support Jinnah's campaign for India's partition, though it was based on manifestly untenable doctrines. The fact that the League leader treated the Communists with contempt made no difference in their attitude towards his movement. Even the advent of national freedom has made no change in the party's faith in the doctrine of subversion. Taking advantage of the ideological differences between Sardar Patel and Nehru, it tried to side with the latter in an attempt to disrupt the unity of leadership in the country's administration. It refused to regard the new Constitution as sufficiently democratic and swore to destroy it if it came into

⁵ *The Communist Party of India*, M. R. Masani, Derek Verschoye, 1954, pp. 42, 43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

power. It drew up what is known as the "Destruction Programme", the aim of which was to storm the very citadel of power.

The party hoped to destroy the new State, first, by overwhelming the armed forces, secondly, by inciting the masses to rebellion and, lastly, by paralysing the civil power by striking at and terrorising the guardians of peace. It was also part of the "Destruction Programme" to put the nation's great transport and communications system out of action. In such a scheme of things, patriotism and sanctity of life were dismissed as the ignoble sentiments of a degenerate bourgeoisie. It is a measure of the perversity of the party's outlook that it described the Nehru ministry as a "blood-thirsty" Government and devoted Congressmen as a pack of heartless "brutes". It, however, invited retribution by its widespread lawless activities in Bengal, Madras, Kerala and elsewhere and by its brutalities and massacres in the Telangana districts of the present State of Andhra. On March 26, 1948, the Government of Bengal outlawed the party—a course of action that was later adopted in the rest of the country. A seasoned statesman like Rajagopalachari, who had to deal with the Communists in his capacity as the Chief Minister of Madras, felt constrained to call them Public Enemy Number One.

Time has failed to modify the party's policy of disruption. Its election manifestoes, published on the occasion of the three general elections, make it abundantly clear that it has no faith in India's progress on the basis of democratic principles. It proved its inability to overcome the trammels of party dogma when it was put in power in Kerala after the elections of 1957.⁷ The Namboodiripad ministry was certainly not sterile during the twenty-eight months it was in office. Its land reform measures, for instance, were designed to benefit the tiller of the soil, but its mistakes far outweighed its achievements. Apart from its failure to fulfil most of its rashly given electoral promises, it countenanced widespread disorder in the State. On July 23, 1957, the Chief Minister proclaimed that in all industrial and agrarian disputes, the police would remain neutral so that the employers might no longer be able to operate from

⁷ In these elections, the Communists secured in Kerala 66 seats in a House of 126. The Congress won 43 seats and the Praja-Socialist Party 9.

a "position of strength" in their dealings with labour. The statement was little short of an open incitement to the numerically-strong workers to rise in revolt against their employers, should the latter venture to reject their demands, no matter how ill-advised and extravagant they were. The consequence was an alarming growth of lawlessness in the State, especially in the plantations, the mainstay of its economy.

In 1958, some twelve Congressmen were brutally stabbed to death at Varandarapally by a band of Communist hooligans, while at another place, Peringottukara, six Congressmen barely escaped butchery by taking refuge in a house. The police did nothing to prevent such wanton acts of violence and lawlessness. Attempts were made to corrupt the founts of justice and judges, impervious to political pressure, were demoted or otherwise punished. Most of the Ministers were above corruption and were easily accessible to the public, but the enrichment of the party at the cost of the State assumed scandalous proportions. The Education Minister, Mundasseri, played the role of a bull in china shop by his mistaken zeal for educational reform. He caused the school textbooks to be re-written with a view to indoctrinating the student population with the subversive doctrine of Communism. But there was no method in his madness. The revised books were shoddy in appearance and were issued in insufficient numbers. In one edition, the well-known Asoka lion capital was printed upside down! Thanks to its failure to face the realities of the situation and to its monumental folly, the first excursion of the Communist Party of India into the realm of government ended in a disastrous fiasco. The formidable opposition organised against the Namboodiripad ministry by the then eighty-three-old Nair leader, Padmanabha Pillai, with the co-operation of the opponents of the Communists, hastened its downfall.⁸

The fact of the matter is that the Communist Party of India is not a national party with its roots in the Indian soil. The Kremlin or alternatively Peking is its Bethlehem. While the entire nation is roused to extreme anger over the Chinese aggression on the country's northern borders, a good number of Indian Communists are wholly unmoved by such happenings.

⁸ Articles on Kerala by B. G. Verghese, published in *The Times of India* on August 12, 13 and 14, 1958, and on January 28, 1960.

Evidently, they see in the national honour and national security an unnecessary hindrance to their wide ranging Marxist vision. The Chinese Communists are much closer to them than their own countrymen. The pro-Peking rally staged by them at Calcutta on September 28, 1963, furnishes a conclusive proof of their indifference to the fate and future of their own country. One can easily imagine the shape of things to come in India, should power pass into the hands of such men. It is precisely because the party's aims are so different from those of others that no patriotic organisation is willing to join hands with it, in spite of their common dislike for the Congress. The alien character of the Communist Party of India is not a small obstacle in the way of its rise to power. Its growing domestic distractions have also greatly diminished its prospects to gain political ascendancy in the country.

The Socialists of India, who drew their first breath in the bosom of the Congress, began well and inspired many with the hope that before long they would emerge as a major democratic opposition party. They embarked upon their political career as the Congress Socialist Party, which came into existence in 1934, and by their youthful enthusiasm ensured that the parent organisation developed an adequately radical outlook on social and economic issues. Their influence in the Congress was, however, largely derived from the predilections of stalwarts like Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose for Socialism. The parting of the ways between the Socialists and the Congressmen, however, became inevitable with the attainment of national independence. The former seceded from the Congress in 1948.

Unfortunately for the Socialists, disunity has been their bane which has frustrated their bid to develop into the second largest political party in the country. Perhaps, even more than the Communist leadership has, they have a surfeit of intellectuals, whose pastime with dialectical hair-splitting is not the sure way of winning a mass following. Despite his marked antipathy to Communism, Acharya Narendra Deva, who died in February 1956, was the spokesman for Marxism in the Socialist Party, while Jayaprakash Narayan became an ardent Gandhian after the Mahatma's death and has now virtually shaken the political dust off his feet. Asoka Mehta, who is more realistic and less dogmatic in his approach to political problems, holds that there

a good deal of common ground between the Congress and the Socialists, since both believe in nationalism, secularism and democracy. His acceptance of the Deputy Chairmanship of the Planning Commission of the Government of India is both a proof of his sense of realism and an indication of his lack of faith in the power of his party to forge ahead as a vital force in the affairs of the country.⁹ Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, for some time the stormy petrel of the party, has always held pugnacious views which have seldom proved effective. Years ago, he thought that the Socialists should be "equidistant" from both the Communists and the Congress and secured a sizeable support for his thesis from the rank and file of his party.¹⁰

The merger of the Socialists with the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (Peasants, Workers and People's Party) in 1952 and the resulting formation of the Praja-Socialist Party did not bring any new strength to the organisation. The advent of such veteran Congress leaders as T. Prakasam, Acharya J. B. Kripalani, P. C. Ghosh and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the last-named only for a brief period, to the party made no great change in its fortunes. Its performance in the three general elections makes it clear that it is of no serious account in the weights and measures of Indian politics. The Congress has obviously stolen the clothes of the Socialists by adopting all the cardinal principles of socialism as the State policy.

Reflecting on the poor showing of his party in the last general elections, its General Secretary ruefully admitted in March 1962: "All our hopes have been belied and our plans have gone awry." The National Executive of the Party was equally candid when it admitted in the following month that the reverses of the Socialists did "indicate the failure to carry home to the voters the very vital differences" that separated them from the Congress.¹¹ The party recognises that "democracy cannot function effectively unless there is an alternative focus of loyalty available to the people which could ultimately provide an alternative govern-

⁹ The author had a stimulating discussion with Asoka Mehta on August 13, 1963, about the shape of things to come in India. Mehta, with a good number of his partymen, rejoined the Congress in June 1964. The merger of the P.S.P. and the Socialist Party, also in June, though welcome, has had no noticeable impact on the political life of the country.

¹⁰ *Party Politics in India*, Myron Weiner, Princeton University, 1957, p. 31.

¹¹ *Four Years of the Praja-Socialist Party: General Secretary's Report to the National Conference, June 8-10, 1963*, Janata reprint of June 9, 1963, p. 16.

ment", but its inability to step into the breach is complete. The Praja-Socialist Party is pre-eminently a party of second-rank leaders, whose lack of following is matched only by the paucity of resources available to it.

The Bharatiya Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party are two other parties which hope to develop sufficient political strength in order to be able to offer effective opposition to the Congress. The Jan Sangh is largely the creation of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, a dynamic figure who was never reconciled to the partition of India and who advocated the resurgence of the Hindus into a strong and vital community, embodying the best of the past and the present in their outlook and actions. Mookerjee was not an obscurantist and when he brought the Jan Sangh into existence in 1951 many had hoped that he would foster it into a powerful organisation. His death, however, deprived it of its outstanding guide so that it is now regarded as a non-secular party.

The Jan Sangh claims to stand for four fundamentals, namely, "one country, one culture, one nation and *dharma raj*, and rule of law". There is nothing narrow or sectarian about these ideals, but it is the manner of their advocacy, followed by impatient demands on behalf of Hindi in opposition to English, which has made them unacceptable to many people. Nevertheless, as the electoral results bear out, its voice is being increasingly heard. The Jan Sangh had sent three members to the Lok Sabha in the first elections and four in the second. The number rose to 18 in the last elections. In the State legislatures, there were 35 members of the party after the first elections, 46 after the second and 116 after the last elections. Its following is, however, mostly confined to the Hindi-speaking regions and the fact that in the last elections it fared disastrously in the rest of the country is conclusive proof of the need for broadbasing its policies and programmes.

The Swatantra Party was established in 1959, but it has shed its swaddling clothes with remarkable speed. Its sudden rise is almost entirely due to the standing of its founder, C. Rajagopalachari. An elder statesman in Indian politics, a man of mellowed judgment and the most devoted adherent of Mahatma Gandhi from the South, Rajagopalachari has, in spite of his great age, spurned rest and retirement and drawn the sword against the

party he had served with such loyalty and distinction. Perhaps, no other critic of the Congress has spoken or written as bitterly against it as this otherwise remarkably even-tempered man has done. Denouncing the Congress ministries, he calls them corrupt, inefficient and even unscrupulous. "There can be no fair election," he wrote some time ago, "with the party in office distributing permits and licences and holding the power to ruin any man or any business."¹²

The opponents of the Swatantra Party have often accused it of being a close ally of Big Business. The party has certainly taken money from the wealthy class, as the Congress has done, but with men like Rajagopalachari, K. M. Munshi and N. G. Ranga, the peasant leader from Andhra, at its helm, it is difficult to believe that its policies and activities are dictated by outsiders. M. R. Masani, the General Secretary of the Party, is convinced that his party stands for the common man, represented by the peasant, the petty trader and the urban lower middle-class. In a discussion with the author, he repudiated the suggestion that the Swatantra Party was the spokesman *par excellence* of the sophisticated section of the city population.¹³ Despite Masani's assertions to the contrary, the party has still to carry its message to the broad masses in the country. Nevertheless, many desire that it should grow because there is an urgent need for a rival political party that can offer an effective constitutional opposition to the Congress.

It is evident from this survey of the relative strength and weakness of the leading political parties in the country that no organisation has yet emerged strong enough to be able to pull down the Congress colossus from its high pedestal. The parties ranged against it are so many, so weak and so disparate that even if they achieve the miracle of functioning as a single body, they cannot materially affect the fortunes of the Congress. A

¹² *The Hindustan Times Independence Day Supplement*, August 1960.

¹³ Masani scored a resounding victory in May 1963 in the by-election to Parliament from the Rajkot constituency in Gujarat. He won against his Congress rival by a majority of 14,151 votes in a straight contest. In the same month, the Congress suffered two more spectacular defeats in the by-elections to Parliament. Acharya Kripalani, an ex-Congress President, scored a great triumph in the Amroha constituency by defeating Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim, the then Union Minister for Irrigation and Power, by 49,445 votes. Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, known for his vitriolic attacks on the Congress, inflicted a crushing defeat on the former Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Dr. B. V. Keskar, in the Farukhabad constituency, by 57,588 votes.

striking evidence of this fact was provided in August 1963 when the "no confidence" motion tabled by Acharya Kripalani against the Nehru ministry was overwhelmingly defeated in the Lok Sabha by 346 votes to 61. The Communists chose to remain neutral. It is this fact of the irremovability of the party in power that is at the root of many of India's ills. Today, the Congress is a pale shadow of what it was in the pre-independence years and in those that immediately followed independence. Its strength is not in itself, but in the weakness of its rivals—a fact which reminds students of Indian history of Sir Thomas Roe's famous observation about the Moghul emperors. Roe, who was England's ambassador at the court of Jahangir, wrote: "His greatness substantially is not in itself, but in the weakness of his neighbours, whom like an overgrown pike he feeds on as fry. Pride, pleasure and riches are their best description. Honesty and truth, discipline, civility, they have none, or very little."¹⁴

Since it developed into a large all-India organisation, the Congress has faithfully reflected all the diverse characteristics of the country. Differences and dissensions in its ranks have been an invariable feature of its career. Since the famous "Surat split" of 1907, there have been many ideological and other conflicts among Congressmen. The brilliant S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who presided over the Gauhati session of the Congress in 1926, later ceased to take interest in its affairs. Father and son in the party, as in the case of Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru, could not see eye to eye on many issues affecting the Congress policy. Similarly, the Patel brothers, the President and the Sardar, made strange bed-fellows politically. More serious and celebrated are the cases of Subhas Chandra Bose, K. F. Nariman and Dr. N. B. Khare who nursed a deep sense of frustration and anger against their party's high command. Even after independence, Nehru and Patel could not easily reconcile themselves to the necessity of working together.

But, however serious and frequent the bickerings among the Congressmen, their party remained a superb fighting instrument and never wavered in its crusade for national independence. It was this sense of mission that helped the Congress to accomplish much in the direction of political unity and economic progress

¹⁴ Quoted earlier in this book at page 26.

in the early years of freedom. During the August 1963 debate in Parliament on the "no-confidence" motion, Frank Anthony, the spokesman of the Anglo-Indian community, stoutly defended the Congress by recalling that it had rendered an inestimable service to the country by saving it from chaos and by its constructive activities.

The Congressman of today is, however, an entirely different being. One can now see in the country a complete vindication of Acton's famous dictum about the corrupting influence of power. Universal suffrage has certainly enhanced the prestige and the status of the common man, but it has also led to the concentration of political power in the hands of a small number of influential men operating at the village and district levels. Seeing the need for their continued support to preserve its lead at the polls, the Congress has been most deferential towards them in its anxiety to retain their loyalty. In most of the States, where the hegemony of the party has not weakened, the hold of such men on the public life of their districts is absolute. They enjoy enormous preferential treatment and make no bones about expecting the district officials to function as their willing tools. A sizeable portion of the large sums of money that are poured into the villages in the name of community development flows in the direction of these devoted Congressmen. Observing the unabashed aggrandisement of his partymen, D. Sanjivayya, till recently President of the Congress and now a Union Minister, openly deplored their fallen condition. Speaking in August 1963, he said that even paupers among Congressmen had now become millionaires.

Adult franchise has also led to the seizure of power by certain castes and communities. Men belonging to castes that have a numerical superiority, *ipso facto* acquire unchallenged dominion in the affairs of their States. The Marathas in Maharashtra, the Reddis in Andhra and the Lingayats in Mysore believe, without openly asserting, that they are a privileged class and that it is their inherent right to dominate the governments of their States. Indeed, it is the ambition of every man that counts, provided he is a Congressman and provided he belongs to one of these communities, to become at least a Deputy Minister and thus qualify himself for a place in the ranks of the V.I.P.s. In many cases, the credentials of those who aspire for or acquire minis-

terial positions are bogus. The fact that some or most of them may have gone to prison under British rule is certainly not a certificate of administrative ability or of statesmanship,—qualifications which a developing country like India, plagued with heart-breaking problems, can ill-afford to dispense with. One recalls with sorrow the astounding revelation made by an ex-Chief Minister, K. Hanumanthaiya of Mysore, that a Congressman had been elevated to the position of Chief Minister in a State after he had spent “a few lakhs of rupees”. Hanumanthaiya had also heard it said that even the office of the Prime Minister of India could be bought if a “few crores of rupees” could be spent.¹⁵

Perhaps, it is not so easy to buy or sell the ministerships, but the fact that no criterion of merit or character is demanded for one's rise to power is most ominous. Men who owe their elevation to their caste affiliations or to their capacity for wire-pulling naturally acquire a vested interest in the new dispensation. They develop a passionate attachment to their own State since their self-interest and personal influence do not extend beyond its boundaries. In consequence, the vision of India, as the land of all that inhabit it, becomes progressively blurred and is virtually superseded by the image of their own State. It is this return to parochialism, influenced by narrow and sordid considerations, that largely accounts for the bitterness and animosity with which rival points of view are urged in inter-States disputes. In the quarrel between Maharashtra and Andhra over the division of the waters of the rivers Krishna and Godavari, the fact that there is an entity called India was seldom remembered. The controversy between Maharashtra and Mysore over the administrative disposition of a portion of the Belgaum district, now in the latter State, was conducted in a language that would perhaps be more appropriate in a war between two independent countries. The fact that the disputants owed allegiance to the same party and that they belonged to a country that is much bigger than themselves and their States was rarely remembered by them.

Again, the factional fighting among the Congressmen, waged in full public gaze in many States, has greatly deflated the pres-

¹⁵ *The Times of India*, Bombay, August 11, 1963. The report of the speech was high-lighted on the front page of this influential paper.

tige of the party in power. The quarrel is in reality a struggle for power between the organisational wing of the Congress and the ministers. It is difficult for party bosses to divest themselves of the illusion that the ministers are their henchmen. They do not give even a moment's thought to the manifest absurdity of their stand. The ministers are the elected representatives of the people and it is constitutionally monstrous to demand that their loyalty to their party should transcend their obligations to the State. The issue is perfectly plain and yet it has given rise to bitter feuds between the two wings in many States, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Office in the party organisation can have no meaning to many unless it can be used to make or break the ministers or at least to influence them. S. K. Patil, one of the able Union Ministers, arbitrarily "axed" under the so-called Kamaraj Plan, to which reference will be made presently, has bluntly stated that corruption in the Congress organisation emanates from the top level.

As if all this is not sufficiently deplorable, stories about the corruption and venality of ministers abound. It is unnecessary to discuss such episodes here beyond recalling at some length what the Indian correspondent of the London *Economist* wrote on the subject last year. "There are," he observed, "four major sources of popular discontent. For one the Congress Party itself is solely to blame. Its factional in-fighting, in full public gaze, which was temporarily quelled by the Chinese attack last October, is again under way in several States. In Gujarat, Congress is merely split. In Kerala, the head of the party machine is busy raking up corruption charges against the Congress Chief Minister. In Orissa, there has been a public slanging match between the rich young chief minister, Mr. Patnaik, and his predecessor over alleged payments from the Calcutta mining firm whose activities have already led to the downfall of Mr. Malaviya, lately India's minister of Mines and Fuel.

In Uttar Pradesh, half the cabinet does not speak to the other half, and the chief minister has been trying to dig out his chief opponent with charges of "moral turpitude" (meaning, it seems, a mistress). And up in Punjab, the chief minister's principal

critic was last month savagely beaten up in sight of a police station.¹⁶

In a country where public morality is greatly influenced by the personal rectitude of its leaders, such happenings inevitably bring the administration into disrepute. In such circumstances, it becomes difficult to maintain the efficiency of the services or to ensure the honesty of their personnel. The link between education and administrative efficiency and the relationship of the two with economic planning will be discussed at full length in the next chapter. It is, therefore, sufficient to recall here what Dr. K. L. Rao, Union Minister for Irrigation and Power, felt constrained to say when he inspected a mismanaged power project at Nellore in Andhra Pradesh. He asked: "Where is the country going to be with such bad and defective planning?"¹⁷ Corruption and nepotism at the ministerial and administrative level provokes widespread public dissatisfaction, undermines the morale of the people, and sometimes leads to most unexpected and fantastic developments.

The serious linguistic riots that occurred in Assam in July 1960 prove this fact. The decision of the State Government to introduce Assamese as the language of the administration precipitated what the Union Home Minister, the late Pandit Pant, described as a holocaust. The happenings were in fact, to quote Pant again, a "gruesome manifestation of the spirit of fanatical linguism, regionalism, parochialism and a greed or a desire to monopolise all public offices within the State".¹⁸ The violence, which lasted for eight days, was widespread and pitiless and rendered 8,200 families homeless. The imbecility of the State Government and the vacillations of the Centre played no small part in making the disaster much more terrible. The question as to what should be the State language of Assam was, from the point of view of the common man, largely academic since his primary concern was, as it has always been, how to make his living. But such are the machinations of politicians that they involve one and all in common ruin.

The demand for the Punjabi Subha provides another example of the irrationality that has crept into Indian politics since in-

¹⁶ *The Economist*, London, August 10, 1963, pp. 500-501.

¹⁷ *The Times of India*, October 1, 1963, box item on the front page.

¹⁸ Pandit Pant's speech in the Lok Sabha on September 3, 1960, during the debate on the Assam riots.

dependence. Decades before the country became free, the Congress had committed itself to the creation of linguistic provinces without giving serious thought to the issue in all its aspects. There cannot be any doubt that an administration conducted in the language of the people has some positive advantages, the most conspicuous one being that it shortens the distance between the Government and the people in the mass. But, while language is a powerful unifying force, its capabilities for promoting division and disunity are equally great. So, after India's partition, if the country's administrative map was to be redrawn on sound principles, it could not be done merely on the basis of language. It was impossible to subordinate the requirements of national unity and security, of administrative convenience, and of economic planning to any other consideration. This indeed was the view of the late Prime Minister when, on November 27, 1947, he declared in the Constituent Assembly that "first things must come first" and that the "first thing" was the security and stability of India.

The Dar Commission, which reported to the Constituent Assembly in December 1948, held that no reorganisation should be undertaken in the "prevailing circumstances" and that at any rate in the formation of provinces the emphasis should be primarily on administrative convenience. The Commission was convinced that linguistic homogeneity should be regarded as only one of the criteria for any revision of provincial boundaries and that no consideration should be allowed to prevail that checked the growth of nationalism or impeded other progressive undertakings.

The Report of the Committee, consisting of Nehru, Patel and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, gave expression to similar views, but added that the creation of linguistic provinces could not be withheld if public opinion strongly demanded it. At the same time, the distinguished authors of the Report maintained that the reform could not be implemented simultaneously and that a beginning should be made in that direction by creating Andhra into a separate linguistic State.¹⁹

Perhaps, the aggressiveness that marked the demand for linguistic provinces in later years could have been avoided if the issue had been faced squarely soon after the adoption of the

¹⁹ *Report of the States Reorganisation Commission*, 1955, pp. 16, 17.

Constitution in January 1950. In that event, the reorganisation of the provinces could probably have been undertaken by taking into consideration not only language but the other important factors mentioned by the expert bodies. Although the J.V.P. Report was adopted by the Congress Executive in April 1949, Andhra could not come into existence before October 1953. In fact, the reorganisation of the States was done mostly under duress. The late Prime Minister was a good and great man, but firm action was not his *forte*. The death of Potti Sriramulu by fasting on the issue of Andhra hastened its advent, thus making any further postponement of the reorganisation of other States extremely difficult and embarrassing to the Union Government. The Prime Minister's announcement of December 22, 1953, relating to the appointment of the States Reorganisation Commission was, therefore, mostly due to the compulsion of events.

The Commission, consisting of three eminent Indians, made its recommendations in 1955 relating to the future of each province. Although the Commission insisted, like its predecessors, on the supreme necessity of consolidating India's political unity, it was no longer possible to view the issue from such a wider perspective. By now emotion and sentiment had virtually dethroned reason and understanding. The late Prime Minister was unfortunately the most burdened man in India. His responsibilities were so varied and the calls upon his time and attention were so numerous that on many occasions he could give only superficial consideration even to matters that demanded the most anxious thought. It stands to reason that the question of the States' reorganisation did not receive from him the amount of consideration which its importance demanded. He was certainly not well-advised when he provoked a controversy over the States Reorganisation Commission by expressing surprise at some of its recommendations, nor were his pronouncements on the future disposition of the city of Bombay conducive to a peaceful settlement of an obviously delicate question. So, when the State of Maharashtra, with Bombay as its integral part, came into existence in May 1960, the event took place in spite of the predilections of Nehru or of the Government of India. This was most unfortunate.

Lack of consistency and foresight in dealing with the problem of linguistic States has given rise to a good deal of separatist ambitions in many parts of the country. The demand for a Punjabi *subha*, sponsored by Master Tara Singh and the Akali Dal, is mostly due to this fact. Tara Singh, now in his eightieth year, is one of the most vital personalities in contemporary India. He is a militant Spartan who, throughout his long and stormy career, has striven to serve his community with a single-minded devotion. He is robustly honest and patriotic and his services and sacrifices on behalf of the country in the pre-independence years are among his notable achievements. He is, however, an obstinate old man who does not always see correctly the rights and wrongs of a question. Apart from claiming that the Sikhs are entitled to a Punjabi *subha*, neither he nor his party, the Akali Dal, has been able to present a rational case in support of such a demand.

As the States Reorganisation Commission has rightly held, the case of the Punjab is unique. For all practical purposes, the Hindus and Sikhs are a single community and are not plagued by the language problem in the sense that the composite States of Bombay and Madras were. Punjabi and Hindi are the two languages spoken in that State and both are so akin to each other and so well understood by all sections of the people that the difference between them is "more theoretical than real".²⁰ It is true that two different scripts are employed in writing the Punjabi, but this does not alter the fact that there is no real linguistic problem in the State. Inter-marriages between the Hindus and Sikhs are widespread and, as a writer has pointed out, women in many Hindu homes "recite Sikh prayers more regularly than their own, and it used to be the custom not long ago for the eldest son in a Hindu family to be made a Sikh".²¹ Master Tara Singh, who was himself born in a Hindu family, concedes that such an affinity exists between the two communities.

In fact, the content of Tara Singh's demand for a Punjabi *subha* is neither linguistic nor non-communal. Apart from the fact that the Punjabi language is the mother tongue of both Hindus and Sikhs, the demand for a separate State is "confined

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 141, 142.

²¹ *The Punjab Tangle*, four articles published in *The Statesman* dated May 4-7, 1960.

to communal elements in the Sikh community".²² It is precisely because the case of the Punjab is so different from that of the other linguistic provinces that the Government of India has been unable to countenance the Akali demand, much to the indignation of that militant party and its leader, Tara Singh. Strange allegations have been made against the Government of India by way of retaliation. For instance, the Akali leader has complained that the plea for the Punjabi *subha* has been rejected because the Sikhs are "mistrusted" as the keepers of a border State. Apart from the fact that the allegation is untrue, it thoroughly confirms the communal character of his demand. The Sikhs are in considerable numbers in the country's armed forces and are more than adequately represented in the other services. Although they comprise some 35 per cent of the Punjab's total population, their preponderance both in their home province and elsewhere in the country is disproportionate to their numerical strength. The verdict of the Das Commission that "no case of discrimination against the Sikhs in the Punjab has been made out"²³ proves how untenable are the Akali grievances against the present rulers of India. Any renewal of the agitation for a Punjabi *subha* will be disastrous both to that key northern State and to the rest of India.²⁴ Apart from other evil consequences, it may well result in the economic ruination of one of the most prosperous States in the country. The State was faced with such a grim prospect during the last agitation.

Down south, in the State of Madras the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is sworn to a further division of India so that the Dravidians may have a homeland of their own. The need for such a dispensation has never been reasonably explained and the absence of a case in its support is amply made good by emotion and invective. The party is not prepared to accept Hindi as the national language and has given the widest possible currency to the canard that the north, with its representatives "dominating", the Government of India, is determined to

²² *Report of the States Reorganisation Commission*, p. 146.

²³ The Commission consisted of S. R. Das, retired Chief Justice of India (Chairman), Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar and M. C. Chagla retired Chief Judge of the Bombay High Court and now a Minister of the Union Government.

²⁴ A highlight of the 1961 Akali agitation was Master Tara Singh's fast for 48 days which was given up on October 1, after much persuasion by his friends and well-wishers.

reduce the south to a state of servitude. The fact that the Centre is always strongly represented by the south, with some of the key portfolios being held by ministers hailing from there, and that South India receives as much attention as the rest of the country for purposes of economic development, is brushed aside as of no importance. The party is also not disturbed by the thought that neither its demand for a Dravida Nad nor its fears, genuine or simulated, about the so-called Hindi imperialism, are shared by other States in the south, namely, Andhra, Kerala and Mysore.

Thus, basically the agitation sponsored by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is spurious and yet it has steadily gained in strength. Its representation in the Madras Legislative Assembly has increased from 12 to 50, while the number of votes polled by it has risen enormously. In 1957, the percentage of votes secured by it in the State was 12.79, but in the last elections it was as much as 27.30. The party has powerful speakers in Tamil and their impassioned oratory can be depended upon to sweep the masses off their feet. The appalling poverty of the people renders the task of seducing them to the barren and dangerous path of suspicion and separatism relatively easy. The leader of the party, C. N. Annadurai, has gone on record as having declared that he is prepared to plunge the country into a civil war if his goal of Dravida Nad is to be reached by that course.²⁵ Parliament has adopted legislation making it an offence to preach or to attempt any disruption of the country's unity. But what is perhaps more important than Acts of Parliament is the need for a drive by progressive parties to win the masses to the cause of sanity and patriotism. Kamaraj Nadar, who gave up the chief ministership of Madras in October 1963, is fully capable of giving a lead to such progressive forces. He is in fact one of the few Congressmen whom office has failed to corrupt. His elevation as President of the Congress gives him wider opportunities to work for the revitalization of his party. He played a crucial role in ensuring the unanimous election of Lal Bahadur Shastri as Nehru's successor after the latter's death in May 1964.

The forces of disintegration assume many forms and become

²⁵ *The DMK Challenge*, an article in *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, March 3, 1962. He has now somewhat modified his gospel of separatism.

active in a debilitated body politic. Since the Muslim League started its campaign for Pakistan on the basis of the two-nation theory, there has always been a section of Muslims in India which has persistently refused to look upon her as its motherland. In fact, a number of communal organisations still exist in the country and work in the cause of separatism with unabated vigour. The leader of Jamiat Islam-i-Hind, H. A. Hussain, has proclaimed from a public platform at Aurangabad that, as India is not an "Islamic" country, Indian Muslims owe no loyalty to it. He also grossly insulted Indian leaders by calling them names. There was a good attendance of Muslim officers of Government at the meeting.²⁶

The revelations contained in the speech of the Home Minister of Uttar Pradesh in the Vidhan Sabha on October 16, 1961, about the outbreak of communal violence in his State call for serious reflection. Calling attention to the communal riots that had occurred in 1957 in Uttar Pradesh and their repetition in 1961, he said that there was a "common pattern" behind such outbursts of lawlessness. A number of legislators in the State Assembly complained about extensive gun-running from Pakistan and about the infiltration of a large number of people from that country. Insults to the Indian national flag and its forcible removal, as at Lari Park at Kanpur, have ceased to be rare occurrences, while the liaison between a number of bigoted religious bodies in India and Pakistan is being steadily strengthened.

The University of Aligarh has never lagged behind in setting an example in separatist politics. "In Aligarh," says Professor Edward Shils, "things are always on the boil".²⁷ The Jamiat-i-Islam, which specialises in teaching the "faithful" how they should live in the land of the infidels, is "known to be very influential in Aligarh University". The young crusaders on behalf of religious intolerance are not tired of shouting "Pakistan Zindabad" "(Victory for Pakistan)" and "Hindustan Murdabad" "(Death to India)". Many of the University teachers share their students' enthusiasm for separatism.²⁸ Referring to

²⁶ Report in the *Loksatta*, a Marathi daily of Bombay, dated February 16, 1961.

²⁷ *Indian Students*, an article in the *Encounter*, September 1961. The subject of student indiscipline will be referred to in the next chapter.

²⁸ *The Times of India*, Bombay, October 17, 1961, Uttar Pradesh Newsletter.

the serious disturbances that accompanied the elections to the University Union, no less a person than Dr. Radhakrishnan, then the Vice-President and now the President of India, declared on October 6, 1961, that they "filled us all with sorrow and shame". It would, however, be useless to conceal the fact that the cynicism with which the Congress agreed in Kerala to become the bed-fellow of the Muslim League, a party that has caused such mortal injury to the country, albeit to fight the Communists in the elections, has greatly encouraged the communal bodies to resume their subversive activities.

Again, a weak Government invites opposition from the most unexpected quarters. The Maharaja of Bastar, Pravinchandra Bhanjdeo, belongs to the fraternity of dispossessed princes whose occupation to misgovern is gone. Like other States, Bastar was merged into its neighbouring province, the ruler being awarded a Privy Purse of Rs. 2,10,100 a year. Being young and impetuous, the Maharaja did not accept the new dispensation gracefully and entertained fantastic projects to gain his own ends. He conceived the idea of reviving the defunct Chamber of Princes, sedulously fostered disaffection among the backward sections of his former State's population, and toyed with the idea of declaring himself an independent sovereign! It did not occur to him that, had he attempted any of these antics during the British regime, he would have been disgraced and unseated from his *gadi* in less than a day. The Government of free India, however, hummed and hawed for years, and, probably becoming ashamed of its own pusillanimity, finally decided to act. The young man was dislodged from his titular position as Maharaja by a presidential order issued in February 1961 and his place was given to his younger brother. A strong Government would have taken such action long before the Maharaja dared to defy it openly.

What is the reason for all these dangerous developments which so grievously hamper national solidarity and make the country's progress uncertain? Surely, the common man is not responsible for them. He is a magnificent fellow who knows the value of tolerance and fellow-feeling far better than the political and Government leaders do and practices these noble virtues in his daily life. One has only to visit the countryside to appreciate the warmth of the villagers' hospitality and to see their natural

disposition to live together in peace and harmony. In the urban areas also people residing even in mixed localities live in perfect amity, no matter from what part of the country they come, to which community they belong, or which avocation they pursue, thus making it wholly unnecessary for platform orators to hold forth on the virtues of the so-called emotional integration. It is astonishing how politicians, who are primarily responsible for fomenting the evils of casteism, regionalism, linguism and narrow-mindedness, are most vociferous in their denunciation as if the common man is guilty of such wickedness.

One reads the long statement of the National Integration Conference, held in September-October 1961 under the chairmanship of the late Prime Minister, the Report of the twelve-member Emotional Integration Committee, otherwise known as the Sampurnanand Committee Report, published on October 1, 1962, and many other documents on the subject with a feeling of bewilderment and a complete lack of conviction. Apart from the fact that they are replete with self-evident propositions, the few constructive suggestions contained in them have remained unimplemented. Co-ordination of education, through the agency of a central authority, was recognised by all such expert bodies with commendable unanimity as holding the key to national integration, but, as the next chapter will point out at some length, attempts have still to be made to evolve a truly national system of education for the country. One should feel grateful to the late Sardar K. M. Panikkar for bringing the much-needed realism to bear on an issue which has been drowned in a sea of platitudes. In his convocation address to Karnatak University at Dharwar in October 1962, Panikkar declared that the "talk about national integration not only verges on the absurd but is also slightly mischievous". The politicians are in fact barking up the wrong tree because the people are already united, as their reaction to the Chinese invasion of the northern borders of their motherland in October 1962 fully demonstrated. India's safety, progress and prosperity can be assured if only her present rulers agreed to administer a sizeable dose of emotional integration to themselves. As a Congressman has observed in his recent publication, *New Horizons*, the people of India will most cheerfully "put up with a lot of hardship and privation in response

to the national call if they see a convincing demonstration of like austerity and sacrifice at responsible levels of authority”.

The same honest Congressman observes that the Congress is in power, “not so much on its positive merits, as in the absence of an alternative political organisation”. Holding unchallenged sway for an unusually long time, the party has almost ceased to care much for public opinion. The Constitution of India is the supreme law of the land, but it has been subjected to so many amendments that one begins to wonder whether it is any better than municipal bye-laws. Again, the Government’s Prohibition policy is a true measure of its indifference to the realities of the situation. In all the States where Prohibition has been introduced, crime, corruption and gangsterism have increased enormously, while illicit distillation has become a major industry. The monthly income of a man making contraband liquor is as much as Rs. 2,000. Mr. Justice Tek Chand and his team which studied the working of Prohibition in the country,²⁹ were told in June 1963 by a taxi driver undergoing a term of imprisonment in a Poona jail that his daily earnings before his arrest were more than Rs. 75 for transporting liquor from one town to another. S. M. Joshi, Chairman of the Praja-Socialist Party, stated before the investigating body that in Maharashtra the bootleggers had become so rich and powerful that they had thoroughly succeeded in corrupting the “State machinery entrusted with the enforcement of the Prohibition law”.

²⁹ The Report on Prohibition, published in May 1964, makes strange reading. Both Tek Chand and the members of his team had seen with their own eyes the widespread character of the evil of illicit distillation. They were convinced that neither the enforcing authorities nor the administrative machinery were willing or able to make the dry laws successful. Their investigations had also revealed to them that illicit trade in liquor yielded a profit ranging from 200 to 1,000 per cent. In the result, “corruption, lawlessness, bootlegging and racketeering” had become rampant, thus gravely undermining the “social fabric” of the community.

And yet, by a strange indifference to the realities of the situation, the team recommended, not the abolition of prohibition which had done good to none except to the enemies of society, but the adoption of Draconian methods for enforcing the so-called dry laws. “Prohibition,” it wrote in the language of the poet, “is not a battle but a war against an age-old evil, which has blighted the people for generations and scourged the world since the beginning of the agricultural era. It has caused more deaths than war, pestilence and famine combined.” Whatever may be the validity of this kind of indictment against the drink evil, it is not at all relevant to India where only a negligible section of the community consumes liquor as a matter of habit. The team’s attack on the Government of Maharashtra for liberalising the prohibition laws was misdirected, while the remedial measures suggested by it for combating the insidious evil of illicit distillation were totally ineffective like scraping as a remedy for measles.

Apart from causing immense loss of revenue to the State Governments, the impracticable "dry" laws pose a serious threat to public health. The liquor that is manufactured is the devil's own brew and its systematic administration even to a hippopotamus would reduce that animal into a scare-crow! Long before submitting his Report, Tek Chand, the leader of the study team, declared that illicit distillers used frogs, lizards, rotten fruit, dry batteries, droppings of hens and even snakes to increase the alcoholic content of the liquor brewed by them.³⁰ While on the one hand, immense sums of money are being spent on public health, the outlay on this account under the third five-year plan being Rs. 342 crores, on the other the Government's pursuit of ideological mirage has encouraged millions of people to poison themselves by drinking the most obnoxious beverage that can be imagined. In a country where drinking is confined to a small section of the population, Prohibition is not only unnecessary but positively harmful.

The Gold Control Order and the Compulsory Deposit Scheme furnish yet another example of how it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Congress Government to feel the pulse of the people. There cannot be any doubt that the excessive attachment of the Indian people to gold and gold ornaments is irrational and that it involves considerable national loss by encouraging smuggling. Nor is the possession of the yellow metal spread evenly among the people. Only 3 per cent of the 90 million and more households in the country accounts for as much as two-thirds of the aggregate demand for gold. The total value of this metal found in the country is estimated at Rs. 3,000-4,000 crores, while the additions to it through smuggling entail an annual loss of foreign exchange worth some Rs. 50 crores. To stop this drain and to discourage the demand for gold, the Government adopted a series of measures, including the ban on the production of 22-24 carat gold jewellery.

There is no doubt that the Government's intentions were praiseworthy, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that the use of gold is woven into the very texture and tapestry of the Indian people's way of life. In the villages, it is used as an essential item of transaction to meet the varied social and eco-

³⁰ *The Times of India*, September 22, 1963.

nomic needs of the community. The fact that, despite the legislation, only a fraction of the immense volume of the hoarded gold had emerged from the dark vaults, that the flow of the smuggled gold into the country had not slowed down, that its prices continued to rule much higher than world parity and that ornaments of 22-carat gold were still being prepared clandestinely on a large scale proved how the Government's well-intentioned measure had ended in a dismal failure. Large sums of public money were spent on rehabilitating goldsmiths and their dependents, numbering ten lakhs, after arbitrarily depriving them of their only means of livelihood.³¹ In September 1963, the new Finance Minister, T. T. Krishnamachari, announced certain minor changes in the gold control regulations in order to afford some relief to the unemployed goldsmiths. His drastic modification of the Compulsory Deposit Scheme was equally timely and wise. The scheme, if it had been implemented in its original form, would have caused much hardship to earners of small salaries and wages and to the large community of petty farmers. It might well have provoked widespread industrial and agrarian unrest. Besides, the whole project would have ended in a fiasco by the sheer impossibility of administering it, as it would have involved the opening of some 30 million accounts, operated through 14,000 offices situated all over the country. The two abortive measures conclusively proved to the rulers that it was useless to attempt legislation that was not only ahead of contemporary opinion but was also administratively impracticable.

It is evident from this somewhat detailed survey of the Indian scene since independence that the ruling party is in desperate need of a vigorous shake-up. It was hoped that the much-

³¹ The late Prime Minister was reported to have felt unhappy about the Gold Control Order and its harsh impact upon the goldsmiths. The former Finance Minister, Morarji Desai, who had sponsored the measure, is understood to have taken the stand that the Cabinet was as much responsible for it as he was. (*Gold Control: Artful Addition to Misery* by H. Venkata-subbiah, *The Hindu*, August 30, 1963.) The question is: did the proposed measure receive the full consideration of the Prime Minister and his other colleagues in the Cabinet before it was sanctioned? There was a similar error of judgment on the part of the Prime Minister relating to the transmitter deal with the Voice of America. In a statement in the Lok Sabha on August 14, 1963, he admitted that *after* the agreement had been signed it became clear that the arrangement was not "in consonance with India's general policy". Surely, such consideration ought to have prevailed before the agreement was signed and not after it.

publicised and widely discussed Kamaraj Plan would furnish the necessary jolt. The plan provided for the withdrawal of senior Congressmen in Government from their offices and for using their services to strengthen the party organisation. When the plan was announced in August 1963, there was an amazing but utterly unconvincing display of enthusiasm on the part of Ministers throughout the country to be relieved of their responsibilities. The party gave Nehru a mandate to apply the axe as lustily and as arbitrarily as he chose. His own offer to step down was received by Congressmen with a feeling bordering on panic and, as in the past, he agreed to stay on in response to their earnest appeal.

He was not at all chary of using the new power given to him by the party. On August 24, the resignations of six Central Ministers, including those of such senior men as Morarji Desai (Finance), Lal Bahadur Shastri (Home),* Jagjivan Ram (Transport and Communications), and S. K. Patil (Food), and of an equal number of Chief Ministers, including that of Kamaraj, the Chief Minister of Madras and the author of the "party before office" plan, was announced. The first major ministerial reshuffle was followed by a few minor ones. As subsequent events fully demonstrated, it was, however, extremely naïve on the part of the Congress leaders to suppose that corruption and nepotism and the struggle for power would end in the party organisation merely by relieving a few ministers of their responsibilities.

Some of those dislodged from their position were really competent men and would probably have served the country better as Government leaders than as party workers. A good number of them quit their office with extreme reluctance, nursing a deep resentment in their hearts at their strange downfall. It was useless to expect them to play the role of Gandhian evangelists and move from village to village, like the wandering pilgrims of old, preaching sanctimonious homilies on personal rectitude. As N. V. Gadgil, a senior but outspoken Congressman from Maharashtra, has said about the Kamaraj Plan, it is useless to expect the quality of the goods to improve by merely changing

* Lal Bahadur Shastri was taken back into the Union Cabinet in January 1964 following Nehru's long illness and succeeded him as Prime Minister after his death in May. Patil also returned to the Centre as Railway Minister in the Shastri Cabinet.

the weights and measures. One wonders whether in a country governed by democratic principles, it was wise to arm a single person with unlimited powers to dispense with the services of ministers according to his own predilections.

It is, therefore, the one-party monopoly of government that is at the root of India's trouble which may persist until another political party, with faith in democratic principles and parliamentary institutions, develops sufficient strength to assume the responsibilities of Government. Time alone should tell how the fortunes of the Congress will be affected now that Nehru is no more. There is, however, no doubt that in the absence of that Titan to guide its destiny, it cannot any longer take its paramountcy for granted. It may well be that the ideological conflicts inside the party will cause the secession of a sizeable number of Congressmen from the parent body and lead to the emergence of a new organisation or to the revitalisation of an existing one sharing their outlook and ideals. Such a development may culminate in the birth of a really potent opposition party, so vitally necessary for strengthening the democratic institutions and the parliamentary system of government in the country.

But all this is highly hypothetical. The development of India into a major democratic power, with a clean, strong and progressive government to guide its affairs, is an issue of world-wide importance and should not be made subservient to the predilections of politicians. In the first years of independence, Nehru had rightly collected around him a team of talented men, drawn from non-Congress parties, to administer the country through his Cabinet. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Sir R. K. Shanmugam Chetty, Dr. John Matthai, to mention a few names, were all able men who served the nation with the same zeal as Congress Ministers. C. D. Deshmukh, to cite a recent example, joined the Congress only as a means to an end, the end being that the way should be laid open for him to join the Central Government which needed the services of a man of his vast and versatile talents.³²

It is an excellent tradition which must be revived and extended to the State ministries as well. Only thus will it be

³² Dr. K. L. Rao, who assumed the Central portfolio of Irrigation and Power in July 1963, is not a politician but an engineering expert.

possible to relax the monopoly of government held by the Congress and to encourage a wider perspective among its members. The recent association of Asoka Mehta with the Planning Commission is a step in the right direction and it should be used as a starting-point for throwing the portals of the State and Central ministries wide open to other men of similar calibre. It is true that coalitions have their own limitations and that many Congressmen may not fancy the prospect of sharing power with others. But such prejudices must be conquered in the larger interests of the country. It is only under such a dispensation that the real efficacy of plans and projects, like the Kamaraj Plan, for disciplined and exemplary behaviour by the partymen will be tested. The need for harnessing a team of talented men to the administration of the country has become much greater and more pressing with the exit of Nehru.

Nevertheless, however bright or dim the prospects for a party system may be in India, the country will long need a renovated Congress. In many other emergent countries, the parties that dominated both the independence struggle and the first years after freedom, have glided into oblivion, like the A.F.P.F.L. of Burma, the Muslim League of Pakistan and the Istiqlal of Morocco. But the Indian party is still vital and is capable of fulfilling the country's most cherished political and economic aspirations. "India," writes an influential British journal, "presents the remarkable spectacle not only of a parliament that is regularly renewed in free and orderly elections (and that still subjects ministers to such ordeals as a daily question-time), but also of a free and critical press of many varying political shades, and of standards of judicial and administrative integrity that, although repeatedly breached, remain significantly high".³³ But India, which aspires to take her rightful place among the great nations of the world, expects much more from her rulers. It is indeed a small consolation for her to be told that a squint eye is better than a blind eye. Far greater efficiency and integrity on the part of India's rulers will be necessary if her image is to conform to the deeply-cherished dreams of her people.

³³ *The Economist*, London, August 31, 1963, p. 730.

14. PLANNING FOR PROGRESS

FOR centuries, poverty has been India's most serious problem. Millions of her people are denied even the barest necessities of life. Since independence, three five-year plans have been introduced to banish poverty from the country and thousands of crores of rupees are being spent towards this end. And yet the problem persists in all its appalling gravity. The Socialist leader, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, caused much consternation in the official ranks by declaring in Parliament on August 21, 1963, that as many as 27 crores of Indian people still subsisted on an incredibly meagre income of three annas a day. Lohia's statistics might not have been entirely correct, but they certainly amounted to an indictment of the Government's economic policy. The Union Minister for Planning found it necessary to make two explanatory speeches in Parliament in an attempt to counter the Socialist leader's charges. He asserted on August 26 that even the poorest 10 per cent of the population spent not less than 4.3 annas daily. Since the difference between the two figures is by no means conspicuous, the Minister returned to the subject on September 10 and claimed that some 60 per cent of the Indian people incurred a daily *per capita* expenditure of 7.5 annas. None of these statistics can, however, conceal the fact that want and hunger are still widespread in the country.*

Thinking people have never forgotten this glaring fact of India's national life. Decades ago, Dadabhai Naoroji, a pioneer of Indian nationalism, made a decisive use of the economic argument in support of his demand for *swaraj*. R. C. Dutt, one of the earliest Indian civilians, wrote copiously about the ruinous consequences of British rule to the country. Justice Ranade and his brilliant disciple, Gokhale, employed their powerful voice and pen on behalf of the poverty-stricken and inarticulate masses. By his mass political movements, Gandhi imparted a

* The World Bank in its latest Report on the Indian economy holds that the country's national income should increase at 7 per cent a year until 1975 if the lowest fifth of the population is to achieve an income of about thirty shillings or Rs. 21 a month per head.

new urgency to the problem of poverty, while the Congress derived considerable strength for its campaigns against the British *raj* from the latter's manifest inability to grapple with the economic issues in a big way.

The Congress is long wedded to the principle of planning as a means of promoting the economic well-being of the common man. It gave evidence of this conviction as far back as 1937 when it accepted office in the provinces. The fact that no effective planning was possible without untrammelled political power did not deter it from taking the first step in that direction. On the initiative of Subhas Chandra Bose, the then Congress President, provincial Ministers of Industries conferred in October 1938 and decided that large-scale industrialisation alone offered the sure basis for the country's economic regeneration. A Planning Committee, with Nehru as Chairman and the veteran economist, K. T. Shah, as General Secretary, was appointed to draw up suitable schemes towards this end. The indefatigable labours of Shah ensured the publication of much useful economic literature in the following years.

The concept of planning received a great impetus both during the last war and in the subsequent years. The world-wide debate on the future of mankind inspired knowledgeable persons in India to give serious thought to the future of their own country. Many economic plans, envisaging a new destiny for India, were drawn up and published, the most widely discussed one being what is popularly known as the Bombay Plan. Prepared by a group of leading industrialists,¹ the Plan provided for a sustained development of the economy over a period of fifteen years at a cost of Rs. 10,000 crores. It emphasized the need for strengthening the industrial base and proposed that a sum of Rs. 4,480 crores should be spent towards that end during the plan period. The authors' views on the development of industries was in conformity with the conviction of the doyen of Indian planning, Sir M. Visveswaraya. A former Dewan of Mysore State, Visveswaraya advocated the establishment of heavy industries as a necessary step towards the country's economic progress and elaborated his point of view in his widely-read book *A Planned Economy for India*.

¹ *A Plan of Economic Development of India, 1944*, was sponsored by Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, J. R. D. Tata, Sir Ardeshir Dalal, Sir Shri Ram, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, A. D. Shroff and Dr. John Matthai.

The scheme sponsored by the Indian Federation of Labour and known as the People's Plan, was even more ambitious than the industrialists' plan. It covered a period of ten years and envisaged an investment of Rs. 15,000 crores. The framers of the Plan were evidently in a hurry and insisted that the centuries-old stagnation of the economy should be removed so that the immediate basic needs of the people might be met within a decade. They attached great importance to the development of agriculture as a major source of wealth and employment. The need for fostering the growth of the country's farm economy has long been recognised both by Indian and foreign experts. Commenting on the Government of India's post-war economic schemes, the London *Economist* urged that agriculture should be given the highest place.

It was symptomatic of the times that even the Government of India, a stout-hearted champion of the *status quo*, considered it necessary to make plans for the future. It created a special Department for Development and Planning and entrusted its direction to Sir Ardeshir Dalal. The limitations of the venture were, however, painfully obvious. Apart from giving expression to widely-known economic truisms, the Department could not accomplish much. The industrial policy of the Government of India was stated thus: "Apart from ordnance factories, public utilities and railways, basic industries of national importance may be nationalised provided adequate capital is not forthcoming. All other industries will be left to private enterprise under varying degrees of control."² Such pronouncements lacked much of their validity in the absence of political freedom.

A new chapter was added to the economic history of India with the setting up of the Planning Commission in March 1950. The Planning Commission has a hard row to hoe, since the problems it has to grapple with are of heart-breaking complexity. India accounts for about 2.4 per cent of the world's land area and about 14.6 per cent of the entire human population. There were 439.235 million people in the country when the last Census was taken in 1961. Next to China, it has the dubious distinction of being the most thickly populated country. In the sixty years, from 1901 to 1961, its population, excluding the Kashmir State, has increased by more than 84 per cent.

² *A Study of Economic Plans*, D. S. Nag, Hind Kitabs, 1949, p. 34.

The increase during the decade 1951-61, which synchronized with the first and the second five-year plan periods, has rightly been described as phenomenal. It is believed that, if the present rate of growth is maintained, India may have to face the prospect of doubling her population of 1901, namely, a little over 236 million, well before the end of the present decade.³ It is against this background of what an eminent Indian economist has described as the "breeding storm" that we must assess the gains made by the country since the inauguration of the first five-year plan in April 1951.

India's five-year plans have attracted world-wide attention. America and many Western countries have welcomed them as a crucial test on behalf of democratic planning and have pledged their massive support to ensure their success. The first decade of planning saw an investment of Rs. 10,110 crores in the economy, the contribution of the private sector being Rs. 4,900 crores. The total external assistance pledged or received from all sources up to December 31, 1962, was Rs. 2,332 crores by way of loans and Rs. 302 crores as grants—a grand total of Rs. 2,634 crores. These figures do not, however, include credits received under the United States Public Law 480. The total value of commodities covered by this category of agreements amounted to another colossal sum, namely, Rs. 1,156.33 crores. Excluding P.L. 480 assistance, American aid commitments to India at the end of 1962 totalled Rs. 724.08 crores in the form of loans and Rs. 140.62 crores by way of grants. America is the largest of all the donors of aid to this country whose venture into the realm of planning under a democratic set-up is viewed with deep sympathy and understanding by her official and other spokesmen. Other countries, including Soviet Russia and Japan, have been generous with their assistance. This global interest in Indian planning may well be regarded as a vote of confidence in the country's future.

The first plan, 1951-56, was relatively modest and it was also exceptionally fortunate. It gave pride of place to agriculture and irrigation which claimed 31 per cent of the total outlay. Timely rains and abounding harvests made the realisation of the various plan targets comparatively easy. The financial drain on the import of food-grains was reduced and progress in the

³ *Census of India*, 1961 Census, Final Population Totals, p. xi.

industrial sector, though not spectacular, was valuable in breaking the hard crust of stagnation in the economy. The end of the plan saw an increase in national income by 18 per cent as against a target of 12 per cent.

The second plan, 1956-61, was, however, launched under less favourable auspices. Food again became the Achilles' heel of the Indian economy, while an acute shortage of foreign exchange prevented the expansion of the industrial sector on the required scale. To achieve an accelerated growth of the economy, the planners raised the share of industries and minerals from 4 per cent to 20 per cent of the total outlay under the second plan, but many targets remained unfulfilled, not only on account of the paucity of capital equipment and accessories, but also due to defective planning. This fact, combined with the unsatisfactory agricultural production, prevented the economy from developing according to plan. The planners had hoped that the five-year period, 1956-61, would see a 25 per cent increase in national income, but it actually amounted to 20 per cent.

The gains made during the first and the second plan period, however, encourage the hope that, given more efficient planning and execution, the country can face the future with confidence. During this period, national income, at 1960-61 prices, which was Rs. 10,240 crores in 1950-51, rose to Rs. 12,130 crores in 1955-56 and registered a further increase to Rs. 14,500 crores in 1960-61, representing a rise by 42 per cent. The *per capita* income also showed an upward trend, but the rate of increase was moderate. The income per head at 1960-61 prices was Rs. 284 in 1950-51; it increased to Rs. 306 in 1955-56 and stood at Rs. 330 in 1960-61, indicating a gain by 16 per cent in the ten-year period.

Despite setbacks, the industrial progress of the country during the period under review was noteworthy. The establishment of a large number of factories, equipped with up-to-date plant and machinery and producing a wide variety of goods, has vastly helped the country to move steadily into the spacious arena of modern industrial economy. With the generous financial and technical aid of friendly countries, three new steel plants were established in the public sector, while the two existing units in the private sector made an appreciable increase in their productive capacity. Machinery-building industries have taken a big

stride forward so that India is now in a position to manufacture machine tools and machinery for use in agriculture and transport and for such industries as chemicals and pharmaceuticals, textiles, jute, cement, tea, sugar, flour and oil mills, paper, mining, etc. The machinery requirements of the railways, including locomotives, are being largely met from indigenous production. The country has also begun to turn out a large variety of electrical equipment and scientific instruments.

Production of new industrial items such as boilers, milling machines, tractors and industrial explosives has been making good progress, while there has been an appreciable expansion of the consumer industries. Great impetus was given to the output of such durable items as automobiles, bicycles, motor-cycles and scooters, fans, radios, electric lamps and sewing machines. A few examples relating to the increase in industrial production will make it clear that the broadening and diversification of the country's industrial economy during the first decade of planning has been most satisfactory. The production of steel ingots rose from 1.4 million tons in 1950-51 to 3.5 million tons in 1960-61. During this period, the number of diesel engines manufactured in the country rose from 5,500 to 40,000. Similarly, India was turning out 16,500 automobiles in 1950-51; but their number rose to 53,500 by the end of the second plan. The number of bicycles produced in the organised sector at the beginning of the first plan was 1,01,000 but the output rose to the impressive figure of 10,50,000 in 1960-61.

The planners have shown equal awareness of the need for building up new assets in the other sectors of the economy. The great river valley projects like Bhakra-Nangal, Hirakud, Chambal, Tungabhadra, Nagarjunasagar and the Damodar Valley Corporation are not mere show-pieces, but vital adjuncts to the country's material progress. Providing both irrigation and power, such projects serve the two-fold purpose of rebuilding the country's agricultural economy and of giving an impetus to industrialisation. The area irrigated at the beginning of the first plan was 51.5 million acres and it was as much as 70 million acres at the end of the second plan. The development of power was, however, less satisfactory and fell short of the target under both the plans. The generating capacity during the second plan increased by about 67 per cent from 3.42 million Kw to 5.70

million Kw. The actual addition was only 2.28 million Kw as against the initial target of 3.48 million Kw.

Apart from the construction of new factories, dams and irrigation works, a vigorous drive has been launched to combat disease and ignorance. The control of epidemics has made excellent progress. That terrible scourge, plague, has been destroyed root and branch. Malaria, which had posed a major public health problem till 1948, has now been brought under effective control. Consequent on the far-reaching public health measures adopted by the Government, the incidence of mortality has been greatly reduced so that the expectation of life in India is now 45 years. Nevertheless, diseases like tuberculosis, associated with malnutrition, continue to flourish on a large scale. As the *Census of India* for 1961 points out, "although our mortality is low by former standards, our morbidity is nevertheless distressingly high".

Education as a factor for ensuring an efficient execution of the plans will be discussed at some length in the course of this chapter. It is enough here to draw attention to the fact that during the decade under review the number of students increased from 23.5 million to 43.5 million. Whatever may be the quality of the present system of education, the right to knowledge has certainly ceased to be the preserve of a small section of the community. Expansion of educational facilities has armed millions of people with the power to read and write and, if they so choose, to enlighten their minds. State patronage has stimulated the growth of the languages of the country and large numbers of people have begun to read the steadily-growing literature that is being produced through the medium of their mother tongue. Text-books, and more especially those pertaining to technical and scientific subjects, are, however, still deplorably inadequate and defective.

It is evident from a study of the first decade of planning that the country's economy is definitely on the move, although progress in the various sectors has been uneven and in some crucial ones positively unsatisfactory. Agriculture has been the *bête noire* of the planners and largely accounts for the retarded growth of the economy as a whole. The Planning Commission has, however, not allowed itself to be daunted by the reverses met by it in its undertaking. It has shown ample proofs of the

robustness of its outlook by conceiving the third five-year plan, 1961-66, on the most ambitious lines. The principal aims of the current plan are to secure an increase in the national income by more than 5 per cent a year, to achieve self-sufficiency in food, to expand industrial output, to utilize to the utmost the manpower resources of the country and to remould society with a view to reducing the inequalities in income and wealth and to distributing economic power among a larger number of people.

The total financial outlay envisaged under the third plan is Rs. 11,800 crores, which is much more than the aggregate investment under the first two plans. The share of the public and private sectors in the outlay is Rs. 7,500 crores and 4,300 crores respectively. Provision has been made for an outlay of Rs. 1,718 crores for financing programmes of agriculture, irrigation and community development under the current plan, while it is proposed to spend Rs. 1,882 crores on the development of industries and minerals. Food-grain production, which was 76 million tons in 1960-61, is expected to increase to 100 million tons in 1965-66. The output of cotton, whose persistent short-fall has been causing much concern to the national textile industry, is required to be increased from 5.3 million bales in 1960-61 to 7 million bales by the end of the plan period. The industrial targets are equally ambitious. The target for steel ingots is 9.2 million tons as against an output of 3.5 million tons in 1960-61. In the same period, production of diesel engines is envisaged to increase from 40,000 to 66,000, that of automobiles from 53,500 to 100,000, and that of bicycles in the organised sector from 10,50,000 to 20,00,000.

The planners hope that if all the programmes included in the plan are completed in time, the national income at the 1960-61 prices will rise by about 30 per cent from some Rs. 14,500 crores at the end of the second plan to about Rs. 19,000 crores in 1965-66. It is also estimated that the *per capita* income will increase from some Rs. 330 in 1960-61 to about Rs. 385 at the end of the current plan.⁴

There was much optimism about the plan at the early stage of its introduction and it was confidently hoped that the country's economy would reach the "take-off" stage at the end of the five-year period. Part of the reason for such heart-warming

⁴ *Third Five Year Plan*, Government of India, Planning Commission, p. 76.

anticipations was the readiness with which friendly countries agreed to bear a good part of the burden of financing the plan. The formation of a consortium of governments and institutions interested in development assistance to this country and its announcement that a sizeable portion of the external resources required under the plan would be duly provided, accounted in no small measure for the buoyancy of the planners' outlook. Help continued to come in, but the financial needs of the country rose to incredible proportions, following the massive Chinese attack on India's northern borders in October 1962. The country is thus confronted with a situation when it can no longer concentrate solely on development. Defence has assumed a new urgency, taxing to the utmost the resources of a country still in the throes of development. It is not easy to imagine what the plight of India would have been if the Western democracies had not rushed to her aid in the hour of her need and peril. Their co-operation is still the mainstay of her territorial integrity and of her hope to succeed with her economic plans.

The gravity of the situation facing the country calls for a realistic appraisal of the system of planning and of the agency employed to execute the various programmes of development.* Perhaps, it is not a light reflection on the Indian plans that neither their message nor the benefits that accrue from them have still reached the masses of the people. The late Prime Minister never wearied in proclaiming to the country that it was currently engaged in the mighty adventure of building a new nation. But his clarion-call was stilled in the wilderness of indifference, ineptitude and inefficiency.

Frankly, the common man is not much interested in the plans because he has not been their beneficiary. The proliferation of factories, dams and other projects has not improved his ability to buy more food and cloth or to acquire a more spacious roof over his head. With self-sufficiency in foodgrains still remaining a distant dream and with the need to feed some eight million more mouths every year, the food eaten by an average Indian is still deplorably deficient both in quality and quantity.

* The mid-term appraisal of the current plan, published by the Planning Commission in November 1963, does not encourage much hope that there will be a noteworthy expansion of the national economy during the five-year period 1961-66. In fact, many of the important targets may not be realised at all

It would be fantastic to compare the nutritional value of the food consumed in India with that eaten in America and the Western countries, but even the diet of peoples belonging to less developed countries is more balanced and satisfactory. Presenting a series of revealing data on the subject, Professor E. S. Nasset, an F.A.O. (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) Nutrition Adviser to the Government of India, declared in August 1962 that the average Indian diet fell "far short of adequacy and that the rate of improvement leaves much to be desired". He pointed out that the country was faced with "great and vexing nutrition problems which urgently need solution". The expert went on to say that "the protective foods such as pulses, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat, fish, eggs, oilseeds and nuts are the foods needed to bring the Indian dietary level up to an acceptable standard".⁵ More than 25 years ago, Dr. W. R. Aykroyd and others had made a similar plea, but the goal of providing the common man with wholesome and health-giving food still remains as elusive as before.

The position concerning cloth is no better. Semi-nakedness is still the haunting spectacle in rural India. In terms of consumption per head, the country was more adequately clothed in the pre-war years than today. In 1938-39, the *per capita* availability of this article was 17.94 yards.⁶ At the commencement of the first plan, namely, 1951, the rate of consumption per head was 11.7 yards, while at the end of the five-year period, the gain made was barely 4.7 yards. Subsequent years saw an actual decline in the offtake, the figure for 1960 being 16.3 yards. The last year of the second plan brought no improvement in the situation, the *per capita* consumption in 1961 being 16.5 yards. It is a commentary on the rate of the country's economic growth that even at the end of the third plan, 1961-66, when its material wealth is expected to increase substantially, the *per capita* demand for cloth is estimated to go up to 17.5 yards only. In other words, the clothing standard of the average Indian will remain below the pre-war level, even after fifteen years of planning. There is no certainty that even the modest target of 17.5 yards will be realised.

⁵ *The Nutrition Problem in India*, an article published in *The Economic Times* of Bombay dated September 14, 1963.

⁶ *Review of the Trade of India in 1939-40*, A Government of India publication, 1940, p. 112.

From the point of view of housing, another tool for measuring the economic well-being of a people, the common man is in no way better off. The poverty of the people, the allocation of insufficient funds for housing, and the enormous increase in the population have greatly aggravated the problem of housing. In the villages, where most houses, are ill-built, with no consideration for sanitation, ventilation or comfort, overcrowding has become a noteworthy feature in the absence of new constructions on the required scale. Living conditions in some of the major cities have deteriorated to an incredible extent due to the unregulated influx of people from the countryside. For instance, since the last 25 years the population of Greater Bombay has grown into unmanageable dimensions. In 1961, there lived in this highly industrialised centre, with inadequate space for expansion, more than four million people. In one decade, from 1951 to 1961, the number increased by some 1.16 million without any worthwhile additions to the living accommodation. Land values in the city have shot up to unimaginable heights, while the cost of building materials, administrative delays, municipal levies and the State Government taxes make new constructions on a big scale almost impossible. Despite the Government's assertion of its faith in co-operative enterprise, defective town planning laws limit co-operative housing activities to small proportions.

The picture presented by industrial housing is equally dismal. In a crowded city like Bombay, where there are not many vacant plots, provision of housing for workers is most difficult, especially since they are loath to reside long distances away from their workplaces. The consequences are terrible. Narrow and ill-ventilated rooms, situated in buildings often in a state of near-collapse and in incredibly overcrowded localities, command premia of a size that has to be seen before it can be believed. A hovel that is miscalled room, with all the forbidding qualities of a festering wound, costs the intending occupant, if he is fortunate to get it, as much as Rs. 8,000—10,000! The bulk of the loot is appropriated by the outgoing tenant, the balance being taken by the property-owner. Slums have increased enormously in many cities, including the once clean city of Bombay, where life is reduced to the bestial level. A veteran social worker has made the astounding revelation that husbands can

find privacy with their wives only in places which cannot be mentioned for the sake of decency. Years ago, it was estimated that there were more than 200,000 foot-path dwellers in the city of Bombay. Since then their number must have increased considerably. There is thus no improvement in the lot of the common man who drifts through life, bearing its burdens with sullen resignation.⁷

It is true that the increase in the population has greatly neutralised the gains made under the successive five-year plans, but the very fact that it has not been possible to control improvident motherhood is a confession of the inadequacy of the country's system of planning. The message of family planning has certainly reached the countryside and there is no doubt that the alert section of the rural community is aware of its value. And yet the torrential flow of unwanted babies continues. This is because the educative propaganda against it is both defective and perfunctory. No organised and sustained efforts have been made to ensure a regular supply of the necessary appliances to people desirous of limiting the size of their families. The remedies have often proved ineffective, causing much disappointment and disillusionment to the users.

Even as it is, the quality of the human capital in India is low and unregulated additions to the population will only lead to widespread morbidity. "When the ratio of food," says W. H. Forbes, "to population is small enough, babies are both a personal and a general disaster." The first factor that influences the national dividend of a country is the size and the physical and mental fitness of its working population. It is impossible to increase the wealth of a nation if the number of those who do not contribute to its production increases disproportionately. In such circumstances, the purchasing power of the community either remains stagnant or goes down, with the result that there can be no widening of demand for the products of the country's industries.

⁷ In his inaugural address to the Second Indian Conference on Research in National Income, August 31, 1960, the then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, H. V. R. Iengar said: "It is conceivable that, while the *per capita* income is going up, the standard of living of large sectors of the population might be stationary or might even be going down. In fact, one of the criticisms sometimes made of our economic programme is precisely this, that the figures showing a rise in *per capita* income disguise the fact of economic stagnation for the bulk of our rural population."

The task of the policy-makers, therefore, lies in effectively carrying the message of planning to the far corners of the country and in convincing the rural population of its beneficent value. It is true that the community development projects and the village panchayats are intended to inspire the inhabitants of the countryside with a sense of participation in the task of nation-building, but the human material employed for the purpose of carrying out the various plan programmes is not of the required calibre. The need for an efficient and enthusiastic administrative personnel to ensure the successful execution of the plans has been candidly recognised by the policy-makers themselves. They say: "In all directions, the pace of development will depend largely upon the quality of public administration, the efficiency with which it works, and the co-operation which it evokes. The tasks facing the administration are larger in magnitude and more complex, but also richer in meaning than in earlier days. From the maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenue, the major emphasis now shifts to the development of human and material resources and the elimination of poverty and want."⁸

The point for consideration is whether any attempts are being made to correlate education with the requirements of planning so that the country may have a growing body of able men to administer its increasingly complex affairs. Education, it has been conceded, is the most important "factor in achieving rapid economic development and technological progress". It is also at the base of "the effort to forge the bonds of common citizenship, to harness the energies of the people, and to develop the natural and human resources of every part of the country".⁹ These are eloquent words, but nothing worthwhile is being done to arrest the chaotic growth of the present system of education and to give it a new purpose and direction.

India is no longer static. The political vote, the spread of education, and the radical change in the environment are steadily leading the Indian people into modern society. The enormous industrial bias imparted to the country's economic growth calls for a new class of skilled men and leaders which the present system of education cannot create in sufficient numbers. The

⁸ *The First Five Year Plan*, Planning Commission, Government of India, p. 111.

⁹ *The Third Five Year Plan*, p. 573.

planners' partiality for education is undoubted and the fact that in one decade, namely, 1951-61, the number of students increased from 23.5 million to 43.5 million bears ample testimony to their anxiety to make enlightenment readily accessible to all sections of the community. But a mere increase in numbers without a corresponding improvement in the quality cannot meet the needs of a changing India. Unfortunately, education in this country is still chained to the system that was introduced during the British regime. No lofty ideals informed that system which was designed primarily to produce a sufficient number of educated Indians to man the lower cadres of the British Indian administration. Even the universities, the top storey of a nation's educational structure, were modelled in the beginning on the original conception of the University of London. Being imitations, the standards set up by them were never very high even in the best of times.¹⁰

Even so, the old system was not entirely sterile. It produced a fair number of scientists, scholars, engineers, doctors, philosophers and political leaders whose labours and achievements helped in no small measure in rousing their people to an awareness of their present plight and their past heritage. Despite its limitations, such good results were derived from the system largely because the number of persons who went to schools and colleges was relatively small and also because they belonged to a class of people, to whom education and enlightenment had never been a new experience. To them, it did not matter whether the medium of instruction was in English or in any other language. In fact, they welcomed the former on account of its merits as a highly-developed international language. Today, education is no longer confined to the so-called intellectual classes. The sons of shopkeepers, artisans and cultivators, who a generation ago would have been content to pursue the profession of their fathers, now go in increasing numbers not only to schools but to colleges. India today has fifty-five universities with more than one million students seeking higher education.

Inevitably, students coming from families with no indigenous or Westernised tradition or reverence for learning, feel far more at home when taught in their own mother tongue. The primary

¹⁰ *Problems in Education*, Deccan Education Society, Poona, December 1960. This view is expressed by Dr. Sir Raghunath P. Paranjpye in his Foreword, p. xi.

stage of education presents them no great difficulties since neither the subjects nor the medium through which they are taught are an obstacle to their understanding. They would perhaps have fared equally better in the high schools if the purpose of secondary education had been more clearly defined. The educationists' ill-considered predilections for languages have imposed a needless strain on the high school-goer. He has to take his lessons in his regional language and learn Hindi, the much-disputed *lingua franca* of India, Sanskrit, the classical language in which the common man is least interested, and the dreaded English, which is presumed to furnish him with a window on the world. A youngster, who has to study four languages, each widely different from the other, cannot have much appetite left for other studies. He has little inclination to read or to reflect, when alone he can widen his mental horizon and acquire proficiency in general subjects. He is, of course, taught other subjects like science, mathematics, history and geography, but the level of his knowledge in them is elementary. A boy or a girl who matriculates is, therefore, neither here nor there, because secondary education has not been planned as a stage complete in itself. In a well-organised system of public education, a large majority of high school leavers receive an education that fits them for direct entry into occupations and professions. Since the Indian education is not well-organised, hundreds of thousands of young matriculates rush to the universities irrespective of their ability or aptitude for higher education. They do so because they have no other choice.

Universities are, or ought to be, the seed-beds of ability and it is from there that the *élite* of a nation emerges. In a sound system of education, only about one in ten or fifteen of the high school leavers go to colleges.¹¹ Today in India, the issue of higher education is bedevilled by political passions. Little consideration is given to the ultimate good of the nation. Denial of opportunities is discrimination, but recognition of talent is not. Even the most fervent democrats have not been able to maintain that equality of rights and education can eliminate the natural inequality of talent and individual capacity. Since independence, the State has been rightly spending large sums of

¹¹ *Post-War Educational Development in India* (also known as the Sargent Report), January 1944, p. 17.

money on the education and uplift of the less-developed sections of the community, but it cannot do more. Not to impose high standards for admissions to universities on the ground that they adversely affect the backward classes is to render a distinct dis-service both to the favoured ones and to the country as a whole. It is absurd to ignore the fact that inequality of intelligence is the decree of nature.¹²

Flagrant violations of the basic facts of life must lead to deplorable results. Today an overwhelming majority of students that go to colleges find themselves totally at sea. The colleges are outrageously overcrowded. "I recall," says Chanchal Sarkar, "with admiration my conversation with the Principal of a Calcutta college where the number on the rolls approached 6,000. What I found striking was his calm determination to persist in an endeavour which he knew to be hopeless."¹³ The classes are no better, while in many cases, the lecturers are either disgruntled or are positively incompetent. English, the medium of instruction, is a difficult and strange language, while the subjects taught are frightfully stiff for the ill-equipped students. There are, of course, better colleges where the standard of teaching is high. Even indifferent ones occasionally turn out brilliant young men and young women, who show great earnestness in their studies and compare most favourably with the able undergraduates of other countries. But, as Professor Edward Shils observes in his remarkably perceptive article, among the million college and university students, "eager-beavers are few, and genuinely aroused and aspiring intellects are very rare".¹⁴

Student indiscipline, about which we hear so much, is in fact the direct result of the overwhelming feeling of despair and frustration that threatens to wither the lives of thousands of young men during the most critical period of their careers. The decline in the standard of teaching and the scandalous

¹² By a curious perversion of logic, till the other day even deserving students in certain southern States were denied admission to specialised colleges on the ground that they were Brahmins. In their case, ability and brilliance were treated as a liability! In no part of the civilized world is talent so penalised. The Supreme Court of India, however, came down heavily upon such a shameful prohibition. It is seldom realised that India does not suffer from a surfeit of talent.

¹³ *The Unquiet Campus: Indian Universities To-day*, a series of articles by Chanchal Sarkar, published in *The Statesman* of Calcutta in 1960 and issued as a booklet.

¹⁴ *Indian Students* by Prof. Edward Shils, *Encounter*, September 1961, p. 13.

behaviour of public leaders provide a further incentive to student lawlessness. Besides being injuriously ill-paid, the college teachers are treated with open contempt by politicians who look down upon them as good-for-nothing idlers. Faced by turbulent students, with no interest in education, and despised by men in authority, some of whom are barely literate, the unhappy professors lose all zest for their vocation. Some of them are in fact stricken with a strange, to borrow Prof. Shils' phrase, "numbness in the presence of intellectual matters". In most universities, their autonomy is reduced to a farce. "One of the most disenchanting moments of my life," writes Chanchal Sarkar, "was when, after I had explained to the Vice-Chancellor of a large university some of the problems and questions which I wanted to discuss with him, he said with perfect sincerity: 'I would advise you to go and discuss them in the secretariat'!"

It is impossible to believe that the defects in the educational system cannot be remedied. Even more knotty problems, like the abolition of the princely States, have been solved with great ability and resoluteness of purpose. The bane of educational reform is, however, inaction, accompanied by insufferable convocation oratory. It would be impossible to make education acceptable to the bulk of its recipients unless it is imparted in their mother tongue from the primary to the university stage. In no part of the world is the pupil instructed except in his own language. The fact that teaching in this country will have to be in more than one dozen languages need not frighten the reformers. All subjects up to the degree course should be taught in the regional languages except perhaps advanced science, medicine and engineering. The unhampered flow of thought and interchange of ideas, so essential for the advancement of knowledge and for consolidating the conception of India's oneness, need not suffer on this account because really outstanding men do not fail to equip themselves suitably with a view to becoming serviceable to the country as a whole. The field of ordinary graduates and others is, however, mostly in their own States. They have little to contribute outside their limited sphere.

The object of national unity can, therefore, be best served if technical, specialized and post-graduate studies are conducted in an all-India language. Hindi can assume that role when it expands sufficiently and acquires precision and terseness in ex-

pressing modern thought. Till then, English must remain and be accepted as a necessary evil even by those who cannot stomach its continued existence. But neither the problem of the language of instruction nor that of the textbooks can be solved if each of the fifty-five universities functions in isolation. It is imperative, in the interests of a common educational policy, that all these universities should agree to teach in their respective regional languages. It is no less necessary that they should have a common policy on the production of textbooks. Such books may be written in a dozen or more languages, but the subject-matter should be the same throughout the country. The University Grants Commission can render inestimable service to the cause of education if it can promote a common outlook among the various universities on these two vital issues. The various expert bodies that have been appointed during the last few years to suggest ways and means for strengthening the emotional integration of the Indian people, have, as we saw in the last chapter, strongly recommended the adoption of a unified educational policy for the entire country.

The second reform relating to the regulation of admissions to the universities must be enforced with strictness, however anathematic such a course of action may be to certain politicians and academicians. The function of the universities is to furnish leaders of men to the nation and this object will dissolve into a chimera if they degenerate into factories for turning out examination-passing mediocres in their millions. The alarming increase in the number of the educated unemployed, disclosed from time to time by the planning authorities, furnishes its own warning against clinging to the *status quo* for an indefinite period. If higher levels of intelligence are insisted upon for admission to the engineering and medical faculties, for example, there is no reason why similar conditions should not be enforced in the case of other degree courses. It is wrong to suppose that any ill-equipped person can make a mark in such branches of knowledge as economics, commerce and administration. But such mistaken notions will persist until access to university education is regulated strictly on the basis of merit. There is indeed no escape from the necessity of sacrificing numbers for quality. Only when the true purpose of higher education is recognised and vindicated will it be possible to attract talented and zealous

men to the teaching profession. A congenial atmosphere in the institutions of higher education will certainly facilitate a regular flow of able scientists, engineers, doctors, administrators, business executives, factory managers and a host of others, who are so necessary for the service of a changing India.

Another serious obstacle in the way of an efficient execution of the plans is the weakness of the administration. At the time of the transfer of power in 1947, there were some 1,150 officers of the Indian Civil Service, but only 450 remained in free India. Whatever might have been the shortcomings of the members of the steel frame, they were certainly not afraid of responsibility. They played an outstanding role in regulating the revolutionary changes that took place in the country in the years following independence. The Indian Administrative Service, which has taken the place of the I.C.S., has also attracted able men, but the structural strength of the government has been suffering a steady attrition due to defective recruitment and postings. It is not sufficiently realised that a strong and sound administration is the bulwark of a country's stability, as the example of a politically-distracted France amply bears out.

The views of H. V. R. Iengar, a brilliant civilian and till recently Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, on the subject are relevant. He writes: "Although, in form, the all-India services are federal services, the policy of recruitment and placement has been such as to accentuate loyalty to the State rather than to the Centre."¹⁵ Central and States Ministers, and more particularly the latter, prefer their senior officers to belong not only to their respective regions, but also, if possible, to their caste and community. In many States, recruitment to the lower cadres through the Public Service Commissions is a mere make-believe so that a large number of appointments to worthwhile posts are made on considerations wholly unrelated to ability. It is absurd to expect much drive and initiative from men who enter the services through the backdoor or on account of their caste.

In a welfare State the responsibilities of an administrator are enormous. Apart from the fact that he has to execute efficiently projects and programmes involving immense sums of public money, he has to ensure an expeditious despatch of work if the schemes are to bear timely fruit. He has in addition to contend,

¹⁵ *Indian Administration, The Times of India*, May 18, 1963.

not infrequently, with political chiefs, many of whom are certainly not gifted with the right type of ability and statesmanship to govern. Since the inauguration of planning, there have been numerous instances where the imbecility, the ignorance and the inaction of Ministers and the inability of their subordinates to prod them into taking quick decisions have cost the country dearly. It is because there is a lamentable lack of mutual understanding between the Ministers and their officials and a failure on the part of the former to appreciate the functions of the public services that we find frequent irregularities and *impasses* in the working of the administration.

H. M. Patel, another outstanding civilian, who was unjustly retired from service a few years ago as a punishment for the bungling of his political chief, has given many examples to show how administrative delays and procrastinations have involved the country in grievous losses.¹⁶ Even senior officers refuse to take decisions and adopt the safe but harmful course of leaving them to their superiors. Patel points out that matters that should never go to the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers are invariably referred to them. A sub-continent, bristling with problems, cannot be governed efficiently on such lines.

Moreover, the load of work with which the public servants are burdened nowadays is so heavy that it is humanly impossible for them to bear. There is certainly a vast difference between a welfare State and a police State and that a public servant has necessarily got to assume a much wider range of responsibilities under the new dispensation. But is he being properly equipped for his new tasks? For example, the *mamlatdar* or *tehsildar* of today has not only got to attend to his normal work of revenue collection, but also to deal with a number of inquiries, applications and complaints, which consume much of his time. He has in addition to submit information and reports to the District Collector on a bewildering variety of subjects for onward despatch to the State Secretariat. He is responsible for ensuring the smooth working of the development schemes introduced in his *tehsil*. Whether he is properly equipped or not, he is required to give decisions on tenancy cases involving intricate points of law. Since he is most likely to be a man of ordinary

¹⁶ *Problems of Administrative Efficiency in India*, a booklet published in 1960.

calibre, perhaps owing his position to favour, he seeks escape from his predicament by the only course open to him, namely, inaction.

The position of the District Collector is even worse. For centuries the pivot of his district, the Collector in free India has become a much-harassed man. The workload on him is crushing. Upon him falls the responsibility for ensuring the success of the numerous development programmes that are intended to promote the country's prosperity. Whether it is at all possible for him and his subordinates to cope with the ever-increasing calls upon their time and energy is a matter that seldom disturbs the thoughts of the policy-makers. In addition to his normal and abnormal work, the Collector has to wait upon every Minister and Deputy Minister that frequently descends upon his district so that for days the administration of his charge is almost at a standstill. Members of legislatures and local party bosses take special delight in lowering his prestige in the eyes of the public in order to prove their own "superior" position.¹⁷ Unfortunately, free India is plagued with far too many worthless V.I.P.s.

Bureaucracy has become unmanageable both at the Centre and in the States. C. Rajagopalachari's indictment of the Congress Government is best expressed in his cryptic phrase "license *raj*". Excessive and impracticable legislation has accentuated inefficiency, besides throwing open the floodgates of corruption. Small men handle big issues involving considerable sums of money. The opportunities for feathering one's own nest are unlimited. Years ago, Mahatma Gandhi wrote that laws should be such that they must command the willing obedience of the people. As we saw in the last chapter, no such salutary principle is tenable today. Unjust and unwanted laws provoke defiance by the public and undermine the prestige of the Government. They also aggravate the inefficiency and the venality of the bureaucracy.

Calling attention to complaints about corruption and nepotism in the Government services, H. V. R. Iengar says in the article quoted earlier that there is a valid ground for "doubting whe-

¹⁷ A Superintending Engineer, with a brilliant record, told the author that he was powerless even in small matters. Ministers made no bones about interfering even on behalf of clerks and peons. District officers, he said, often felt helpless when they wanted to get rid of incompetent and impertinent subordinates.

ther the Government has the machinery for handling with speed, with wisdom and with firmness a range of controls which require for their operation, extensive technical knowledge, complete objectivity and a sense of drive". It is impossible to satisfy any such criteria so long as incompetent and obsequious men find their way into the services and are assigned tasks which neither they nor even those better equipped than themselves are physically or mentally capable of undertaking. It is small wonder, therefore, that in the situation obtaining in India today, many of the promising students going abroad for higher studies do not return to the country.

Planning in India has thus still to become far more dynamic than it is today if it is to yield the desired results. Some years ago, V. T. Krishnamachari, former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, complained at an economic conference that the unsatisfactory progress in the agricultural sector was due to the absence of administrative efficiency and integrity. He was of the opinion that the country's farm output could be doubled and even trebled if only the right steps could be taken. Statements like these by responsible men abound, but action on the right lines is unfortunately not forthcoming. In spite of the vast development of industries, agriculture is still the mainstay of India's economy. Farm production accounts for nearly half of the total national income, while the number of persons depending upon agriculture is on the increase, as the following figures bear out: 103.6 million in 1950-51, 111.6 million in 1955-56 and 120.2 million in 1960-61. Out of every 100 working people, 79 depend on this most ancient occupation.

The aim of the planners, therefore, is to ease the pressure on land, to increase the farm output and to diversify the rural economy by encouraging the development of the existing hand and household enterprises, besides establishing modern factories of small and medium size. Many States have passed far-reaching land legislation as an encouragement to increased agricultural production. The hope of reviving the countryside, however, greatly rests on the success of the community development projects, upon which immense sums of money are being spent under the successive five-year plans. In fact, community development was initiated as a "new experiment in rural planning under which the task of seeking a better life and constructing and

rehabilitating the village was to be undertaken by the villagers themselves". Tangible benefits have accrued to the rural population in those villages where the development of the community has been undertaken in a spirit of co-operation and understanding between the villagers and the officials associated with the movement. But such instances are rare.

Dr. D. R. Gadgil, an eminent economist, holds that the movement has not borne the desired results because "characteristically, it originated with a foreign expert and was sponsored and worked through top-level bureaucrats".¹⁸ An official investigating body has reported that the least successful aspect of Community Development is its failure to "evoke popular initiative". Subsequent attempts to democratise and decentralise the movement, so that the essential work of reforming the villages may fall upon the villagers themselves, have also not proved very fruitful, the "prestige and position of officialdom", to quote Prof. Gadgil again, being at the bottom of the trouble.

These are some of the major shortcomings of Indian planning which is further hampered by ideological considerations. Asoka Mehta, who toured Europe and America extensively before taking over his new assignment as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, stated in December 1963 that the World Bank and foreign economic experts, who took deep interest in India's development, were not pleased with the rate of the country's economic growth. In fact, according to him, the World Bank, the real driving-force behind the Aid-India Club, had begun to tire of its responsibility since it felt that its advice and criticism on the performance of the economy were not being given the necessary attention they deserved from the Indian planners.

It would be wise to take heed of this warning betimes. Informed world opinion is convinced about the great scope that exists for the country's development. It should not be disappointed on any account. In a memorandum published by the United States Business International Group in November 1961, after its visit to India, ten reasons have been given for supporting the Group's conviction that this country is a safe and rewarding place for foreign investment. The document draws attention to the fact that India is potentially the biggest market in the

¹⁸ *Planned Agricultural Development*, Prof. D. R. Gadgil, published in a Bombay Weekly, *Opinion*, September 17, 1963, p. 5.

free world. This view has been corroborated by other foreign observers, including the President of the United Technical Service International, who calls attention to the 'conciliatory' press note of the Government of India of May 8, 1951, on foreign capital. The Press Note, which was intended to allay certain apprehensions, says: "Basically, the policy regarding foreign investments would be to attract foreign capital in those fields which the country needs to develop in pursuance of the Plan targets."

Another welcome feature noticed by the American businessmen in India was the stability of the administration and its democratic character. Besides, there was a growing appreciation in the country of the "practical problems of business". Point ten of the memorandum has been written in stirring language and deserves reproduction *in toto*. "There is," says the document, "a genuine desire among many business leaders in the free world to allocate a part of their human and material resources for raising the living standards of the people of India in ways that only private enterprise can achieve. The people of India are more than a market, more than neighbours in need. They hold in their hands the destiny of the whole of South Asia and perhaps of the free world itself."

In view of the widespread international interest in the Indian planning, the debate on the relative merits of private and State enterprise is, as W. W. Rostow, the distinguished American economist, points out, an old-fashioned and an out-of-date way of putting the problem of economic growth in the contemporary world. "In both developing societies," he writes, "and in more advanced societies, the most natural and fruitful relationship between public and private enterprise is one of partnership towards larger national purposes."¹⁹ This is also the view of the Indian Planning Commission which, in its Second Plan document, concedes that "the two sectors have to function in unison" and that they are to be "viewed as parts of a single mechanism". It is the lesson of history that free enterprise, with its disciplines of competition, ensures a rapid and durable economic progress. The complementary character of the two sectors has been well described by another writer who says: "Whatever proportion

¹⁹ *National Growth: Function of Government*, second of three articles published in *The Hindu* of Madras on September 2, 3, 4, 1963

may at any time be normal, the point is that the whole of the field of production, income, and employment include these sides, and that a good economy depends on each side being fully enterprising and efficient." There must thus be a genuine comradeship between free and State enterprise, a comradeship that should engage their strenuous and loyal exertions in pursuit of their common goal.

India has staked her future on her economic plans. Their success will mean a new life for her 440 million people and the vindication of democratic principles and methods. Nearly all the advanced countries of the world are actively co-operating in this great experiment. Their interest and generosity and the hopes and aspirations of the less-developed countries, which have modelled their own economic schemes on the Indian system, impose a heavy obligation on the Government and the people of India to ensure the success of their great undertaking. There is much creative fervour in the country awaiting to be harnessed to constructive purposes. With the continual search for more resources at home and with the promise of assistance from abroad, there cannot be a serious shortage of money in the field of development. What is necessary, therefore, is the determination to reach the plan targets with the aid of a competent and honest staff. This is exclusively an Indian task in which no foreign participation is possible. The Chinese menace has imposed on India the necessity and the urgency of becoming strong economically and militarily.

15. INDIA AND PAKISTAN

SINCE its creation in August 1947, Pakistan has not been able to live on terms of friendship with India. Its inability to settle its differences with its most important neighbour, to whom it owes its existence as a separate sovereign State, is inherent in its very origin and composition. Judged by any standard of territorial demarcation, Pakistan is undoubtedly a unique creation. It does not, writes Professor Callard, "possess a history of national unity, it has no common language nor a uniform culture, and it is neither a geographical nor an economic unit".¹ Even so, it is the largest Muslim State in the world and was "deliberately" created on the sole basis of "religious unity".²

Brought into existence less than two decades ago, Pakistan is still an infant State with no historical traditions, although the territories comprising its western zone were the home of India's ancient civilization. Not much has come down to us about the Indus Valley Civilization, but what has been unearthed by the spade of the archaeologist at Harappa in the Punjab and at Mohenjo-daro in Sind, bears ample testimony to the fact that, as far back as the fourth and third millennium before Christ, there flourished a highly urbanised civilization in large parts of those provinces. The social composition of the Indus people was, to quote Sir John Marshall, at least "equal to that found in Sumer and superior to that prevailing in contemporary Babylonia and Egypt".

Then came the Aryans who gave the Indian sub-continent a distinctive way of life. As we march down the corridor of time, we find a flourishing centre of learning at Takkasila or Taxila in the North-West Frontier Province. It was a famous and venerable university which drew students from all over the

¹ *Pakistan: A Political Study*, Keith Callard, George Allen & Unwin, 1957, p. 11.

² *The Making of Pakistan*, Richard Symonds, Faber & Faber, 1949, p. 13. According to the latest Census, Pakistan has a population of 93,812,000, of whom 82 million are Muslims, the remainder being non-Muslims, mostly Hindus.

country and from abroad. Some of the greatest luminaries of ancient India were associated with it. Panini, the great grammarian of the fourth century B.C., Kautilya, the celebrated minister of Emperor Chandragupta Maurya and author of *Arthashastra*, the famous treatise on statecraft, and Charaka, one of the two progenitors of Indian medical science, hallowed the precincts of this great seat of learning by their presence. Taxila in fact became the intellectual capital of India, claiming the allegiance of other educational centres in the country and the homage of scholars and lay men alike. Unfortunately, the fact that the people of ancient India rose to great heights of civilization, enlarging and ennobling the cultural heritage of mankind, does not count for much in the new State of Pakistan.

No right-thinking person in India or elsewhere has the slightest doubt about the permanence of Pakistan and yet its leaders find it necessary to assure themselves and their people repeatedly that the new State has come to stay. Apprehensions about its future assailed their thoughts even before it was born. Its founder, Jinnah, was never certain till the last moment whether his crusade for India's partition would succeed. Sri Prakasa, India's first High Commissioner in Pakistan, records that he was authoritatively informed at Karachi that "the greatest shock of Mr. Jinnah's life was the conceding and establishment of Pakistan. He really never wanted it; and when it had come he did not know what to do with it. He found it almost impossible to manage it".³

There is other testimony to prove that the Muslim League's separatist campaign was really intended to wring large concessions for its community without going to the extreme of subverting the territorial integrity of the country. Penderel Moon writes that "privately Jinnah told one or two people in Lahore that this Resolution (on partition) was a 'tactical move'".⁴ The same writer observes that Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, Premier

³ *The Hindustan Times*, September 16, 1962. The first Editor of Jinnah's mouthpiece, *Dawn*, who is an Indian Christian, told me that the creator of Pakistan had expressed to him his astonishment at his great good fortune. Again, Jinnah's biographer writes: "Quaid-i-Azam arrived at Government House and as he walked up the steps he made a statement that was remarkable. He said to Lieutenant Ashan: 'Do you know, I never expected to see Pakistan in my lifetime. We have to be very grateful to God for what we have achieved'." (*Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, Hector Bolitho, 1954, p. 195.)

⁴ *Divide and Quit*, Penderel Moon, Chatto and Windus, 1961, p. 21.

of undivided Punjab, disliked the demand for India's partition and that "his Muslim followers shared his antipathy to the idea of Pakistan".

And yet the windfall dropped into the lap of the champions of separatism and of the two-nation theory. The thinking sections among them were, however, assailed by doubts about the soundness of the foundations upon which they proposed to build the new State. Perhaps, the task would have been made less difficult if Jinnah himself had clear notions about the future disposition of his creation. But, unfortunately, being long inured to a career of negativism, he was not endowed with the gifts of constructive statesmanship.

Speaking on September 11, 1947, he called on the people of Pakistan to abandon the "angularities" about their belonging to the "majority" and the "minority" communities. "You may," he declared, "belong to any religion or caste or creed; that has nothing to do with the business of the State." It was, however, not to his advantage to remind himself that the history of India would perhaps have been different if he himself had practised the virtue he now so eloquently preached.

Besides, there was a complete lack of consistency in his public utterances which disclosed a grave confusion of thought and belief on some of the basic issues that confronted him. In a press interview on October 24, 1947, he asserted that "the two-nation theory is not a theory but a fact. The division of India is based on that fact". How could he reconcile this thesis with his plea of September 11 to the people of Pakistan to forget their communal predilections? What was to be the place of the non-Muslims in the newly-created "Muslim State" if its population was to be demarcated into different nations? Although expediency became the basis of his political philosophy, the rationalist in Jinnah did not, however, abandon him altogether.

It was clear to this one-time champion of Indian freedom and "ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity" that modern States cannot be run on the basis of race, religion or community.⁵ It was, therefore, the essential untenability of his stand that filled him

⁵ In a conversation with Sri Prakasa in April 1939, Jinnah turned to him "rather affectionately" and said: "Just as your grandfather had so many Muslim friends, so perhaps I might tell you that for myself I have only Hindu friends." (*The Hindustan Times Weekly*, September 9, 1962.)

with grave forebodings about the future of his State. And since it was too late for him to resile from his position, he sought to assuage his mental anguish by unjustly attacking Indian leaders. Writing from Karachi on October 3, 1947, Campbell-Johnson said that Jinnah was "utterly convinced" that the Indian leaders' real aim was to strangle Pakistan at birth. Gandhi had never accepted the partition as a *fait accompli* and was all the time spreading "Hindu poison" in the guise of religious teaching, while Nehru was a leader without power. Sardar Patel was the real dictator who was in league with the Hindu Mahasabha to carry out his anti-Muslim designs!

Commenting on Jinnah's state of mind at this time, Campbell-Johnson writes: "It is clear that Jinnah, living in almost total isolation both from his followers and the outside world, is a far from happy man who is trying to exorcise his fears by nourishing his hatreds." To quote this unimpeachable authority again: "He (Jinnah) kept on harping on the masochistic theme that India was out to destroy the nation of his making, and his attitude to every personality and act across the border was coloured by that general assumption."⁶ It is tragic that the legacy of suspicion and hatred for India bequeathed by the founder of Pakistan, persists. In a broadcast message to his countrymen from Lahore on October 7, 1947, Liaqat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister, considered it prudent to declare: "Pakistan is not a shooting star that shines for a brief moment. Pakistan will not die." Was it necessary to stress the obvious? The fear that India may send Pakistan to its doom is preposterous,

⁶ *Mission with Mountbatten*, pp. 217, 230. When in January-February 1948, India was in mourning at the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, Jinnah held a banquet at Karachi and invited Sri Prakasa, the Indian High Commissioner, to it. The invitation was politely declined. Sri Prakasa discloses that before Gandhi's death, the Mahatma desired to meet Jinnah at Karachi in order to devise measures for improving the Indo-Pak relations. But the two Parsi emissaries of Mahatma, specially sent from India, failed to see the head of the Pakistani State. They were understood to have been "authoritatively told that Mr. Jinnah was not prepared to meet Gandhiji unless he made himself the Governor-General of India"!

We learn from the same source that, while moving tributes were paid to the Mahatma in the Pakistan Assembly by many speakers, including the Prime Minister, Liaqat Ali Khan, on hearing of his death, Jinnah could not find appropriate words for the occasion. Although other speakers had called Gandhi 'Mahatma', it was impossible for Jinnah to do so. Sri Prakasa writes: "So he referred to Gandhiji as merely 'he' and said that he served his community as he thought best." (*The Hindustan Times Weekly*, October 27, 1963.)

for, apart from other considerations, the Indian people are convinced that adventurism of any kind is not only reprehensible but dangerous.

Frankly, it is inconceivable for Pakistan to urge its claims upon India or to ensure its survival from internal disruption unless it persists in adhering to the theories and doctrines which helped to bring it into existence. The untenability of the two-nation theory and the injurious consequence of giving effect to it are recognised by many thinking persons in that country, but they also realise the impossibility of abandoning it in regulating the Indo-Pakistani relations. Even before partition, Khaliqzaman and H. S. Suhrawardy were convinced that the theory boded no good to Indian Muslims.

Speaking in the Pakistan National Assembly in October 1956, Suhrawardy, who was then the Prime Minister of his country, declared: "The two-nation theory was advanced by the Muslims as justification for the partition of India and the creation of a State made up of geographically contiguous units where the Muslims were numerically in a majority. Once that State was created, the two-nation theory lost its force even for the Muslims."⁷ The theory is not only spurious, but most harmful to the peace, the safety, and the well-being of the peoples of the two countries and yet it claims the magnitude of Pakistan's State policy. The rulers of that country know that they cannot challenge the right of India to Kashmir once they concede the fact that the Hindus and Muslims are basically one. Nor can they expect to retain the loyalty of East Bengal for long by throwing away the weapon of "divide and rule", which they have been using against the population there with such devastating effect. There will be no such weapon in their hands once they renounce the two-nation theory.

Pakistan is indeed a unique country. There are no instances in the world where the component parts of a single country are separated from one another by more than one thousand miles. There is in fact little in common between East Bengal and distant West Pakistan. Geographically and indeed according to almost all the criteria invoked by Jinnah to prove his "two-nation" theory, the peoples of the two zones are entirely different from one another. It is true that they share a common religion.

⁷ *Pakistan: A Political Study*, Keith Callard, pp. 252-53.

Have not wise men said that Muslims are those who have entered the service of God according to the path revealed by His Prophet, Mohamed? Have they not also declared that the service of God is the whole duty of man and that there cannot be any separation between religion and politics? But granting that such ideas are relevant in modern society, the hard realities of life reveal, as they have already revealed in East Bengal, that religion, however indispensable, cannot nourish and clothe starving and naked bodies. East Bengal is notorious for the abysmal poverty of its people.

Since the partition of India, the two wings of Pakistan have maintained an uneasy and unnatural relationship between one another. The difference between them begins with their physical features which are noteworthy for their contrast. The pride of East Bengal is its magnificent river system, the region being watered and fertilized by two of the largest rivers in Asia—the Brahmaputra and the Ganga. Nine-tenths of the province is flat alluvial plain, with cultivated fields stretching for “hundreds of miles interspersed with villages nestling amidst bamboo clumps, mango and jack-fruit gardens and timber fuel trees. The monotony is broken by coconut, palm, and betel-nut trees in the coastal district”.⁸ It has a tropical monsoon climate. The rainfall varies from about 65 inches in Dacca to 160 inches in Sylhet. East Bengal has an area of 54,015 square miles, with a population of more than 50 million. It is one of the most thickly-populated regions of the world, with a density of 922 persons per square mile. The people are ground down by poverty, neglect and oppression and furnish a readily inflammable material for the propagandist.

West Pakistan has a much larger area, that is, 306,020 square miles, and a smaller population. In 1961, it had nearly 43 million people, with a density of 138 per square mile. The mainstay of its economy is the Indus basin which is watered by perennial rivers, constantly fed by the snowfields in the Himalayas from which, with the exception of the Sutlej, they take their rise. The rivers of the Indus Plain are the only source of water to the region and, realising the value of irrigation for the continued progress of West Pakistan, India came to an agree-

⁸ *The Economy of Pakistan*, J. Russell Andrus and Azizali F. Mohamed, Oxford, 1958, pp. 13-15.

ment with Pakistan in 1960 which, as will be narrated presently, will ensure the flow of water from the Indian rivers into the canals of the neighbouring country for a certain stipulated period. The climate of the Indus basin is hot and dry and the rainfall in the region is so scanty, ranging from 10 inches to a little over 20 inches a year, that it is most inadequate to sustain agriculture on a large scale. In contrast to the inhabitants of East Bengal, the people of West Pakistan are tall, sturdy and fair-skinned. They are economically better off, but literacy among them is barely 11.7 per cent as against 17.5 per cent in East Bengal, the average for the whole of Pakistan being 15.3 per cent. There is no problem of minorities in West Pakistan as it made a clean sweep of them soon after India's partition.

East Bengal's dissatisfaction with the present dispensation is deep and widespread and cannot be removed by any facile methods. Desperate poverty, political disfranchisement, exclusion from important callings, and exploitation and aggrandizement of the resources of their homeland by aliens from distant West Pakistan, are the most dominating factors in the life of the people of East Bengal. The pressure of population, besides vastly aggravating their want and hunger, remorselessly drives hundreds of thousands of them in search of food and work across their national frontiers.

"In the rural areas," says a writer in a recently published booklet entitled *Inside Pakistan*, "the only clothes of the Bengali Muslims are a *lungi* and a *gamchha* and at most a half-shirt. Their huts are of straw thatch, bamboo flat wall and earthen floor. . . . They get two square meals a day only for a few months in the year, semi-starvation being their lot in the remaining months." Dominated by the Punjabis and the Pathans, the people of the province are precisely in the same position as the indigenous Muslims were in relation to their imported co-religionists during the days of the Bahamani sultans of the Deccan. The enmity between the two factions in those days was rendered inveterate by the claim of the foreigners to racial superiority and to higher intellectual and military attainments and by their easy acquisition of the highest positions in the land, with all the attendant advantages in the shape of power, prestige and prosperity.

Today the East Bengalis are exposed to similar disabilities and affronts. They are systematically excluded from the armed forces because they are regarded as unwarlike. Their place in the civil services is also negligible. They are recipients of only residuary benefits from the country's development plans, while the foreign exchange earned by their province's exports is largely utilized for financing the development projects in West Pakistan. In short, East Bengal is virtually reduced to the status of a colony.

The observations of Kingsley Martin, the famous British journalist, on the subject are pertinent. He writes: "In East Pakistan Dacca's resentment against Pindi is deeply rooted in the Bengali's dislike of being ruled by Punjabis or Pathans. My impression there is one of extreme instability. One sees what is probably the world's worst case of over-population and under-nourishment; it seems unlikely that it can continue long without social upheaval. The educated *élite* is openly hostile to the regime."⁹

An article in the London *Economist* points out that "a planning commission economist recently estimated that income a head in the East was 60 per cent lower than that in the West. Most new private capital is concentrated in the West. Finally, almost 90 per cent of the central government staff, and almost all the armed forces, come from the West. This is 'two nations' with a vengeance, and twelve hundred miles between them".¹⁰

The situation in the province has become much more desperate since Kingsley Martin and the *Economist* wrote. On January 7, 1964, Maulana Bhashani, a prominent East Bengali leader, openly demanded in an interview at Dacca that his province should be given complete autonomy, with only defence, foreign policy and currency reserved for the Central Government. Autonomy, he declared, was "the only antidote to the venom of provincial bigotry" and warned the authorities that "a lava was slowly boiling up" in the hearts of his people against the existing disposition.

The resentment of East Bengalis at the domination of their

⁹ *New Statesman*, February 16, 1963.

¹⁰ *The Economist*, London, October 5, 1963. The article is entitled *Carpenter in Trouble*.

homeland by the West Pakistanis is as old as Pakistan itself. Among the many disillusionments that were in store for them was the flat refusal of the legislators from the other zones to concede East Bengal its rightful place in the country's constitution. Commenting on the resulting deadlock, the Chief Minister of the province declared in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on October 14, 1953, that it did not augur well for the country. He said: "The nation is going to lose confidence in the leaders, in those who are at the helm of the administration."¹¹

In a series of seven editorials, written a few years ago, *Sangbad*, a Bengali language daily of Dacca, made a thorough exposure of the various acts of omission and commission on the part of the Pakistani Government towards the people of the eastern zone. It wrote: "Whenever any claim was put forward on behalf of the just rights of East Pakistan in the cultural, political and economic field, doubt was cast on the patriotism of the East Pakistanis *en masse* and a reign of terror was let loose. Except for a few, most of the East Pakistan political leaders were branded at one time or the other as traitors."¹²

In the two seminars on national integration held in 1961, the representatives from East Bengal maintained that religion alone could not bind the two wings together. The people of East Bengal, they asserted, were different from their compatriots in the western zone racially, linguistically and culturally and the two could be "held together only on the basis of justice, fair-play and equity, particularly in the field of economic development".

Emphasizing the need for large-scale investment in the economy of East Bengal as the only means of rescuing its people from abject poverty, the *Sangbad* declared: "There is such a wide gap in the rates of economic growth in East and West Pakistan that to remove this difference within the scope of a single economy, it would be necessary to stop all development projects in West Pakistan and divert all available resources to East Pakistan. Such a move will obviously create strong resentment in West Pakistan. . . . It is to avoid this undesirable situation

¹¹ *Pakistan: A Political Study*, Keith Callard, p. 97.

¹² *The Times of India*, Pakistan Newsletter, November 28, 1961.

that the economists of East Pakistan favour two separate economies for the two wings."

The leader-writer of this bold Bengali daily called attention to the Muslim League's famous Partition Resolution adopted at Lahore in March 1940. The Resolution envisaged that "the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute '*independent states*' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous". The writer held that the idea of forming the seceding provinces into two "sovereign States" was not pursued "due to bungling just before the establishment of Pakistan".

Recalling the meretricious character of the crusade for partition, he complained that "there was never any attempt to determine what was the national heritage of the Muslims in the context of geographical, economic, political and cultural factors. This is the cause of the crisis in our political life". Another Bengali daily, *Ittefaq*, has demanded that the constitution of Pakistan should be on the basis of the Lahore Resolution of 1940 so that East Bengal may be free to shape its destiny according to its own choice. No amount of casuistry can explain away the fact that the framers of the Lahore Resolution were quick to see the glaring disparity between the two zones and wanted each of them to work out its own destiny independently of the other.

Field Marshal Ayub Khan is an astute person and it is impossible that the real import of the Lahore Resolution can have escaped him. Nor can it be easily believed that he has not been able to see the deep contradictions inherent in the structure of Pakistan. But, as the head of the Government of his country, he cannot willingly countenance East Bengal's demand for self-determination and hopes to arrest the growing movement in that direction by making irrelevant appeals to the emotions of its people. "If you ask me," he declared on March 1, 1962, "and if I were an East Pakistani, then, in order to get away from the cultural domination and grip of Calcutta, I will change the script. That will give a tremendous psychological freedom to the people of East Pakistan from the forces of Hindu culture and influence."¹³ The President's hope of

¹³ *The Hindustan Times*, March 29, 1962.

uniting the peoples of the two zones of Pakistan, separated from one another both by physical and mental distance, is, however, most unlikely to succeed. The East Bengalis have firmly refused to purchase their "psychological freedom" by forswearing their profound convictions and their inherited way of life. Since the beginning of 1964, their demand for self-determination has gathered much greater momentum.

If this is the plight of a vital section of the Muslim "nation", for whose benefit and greater glory India was forced to cede her territories, one can easily imagine the condition of the Hindus in Pakistan. They are in fact a submerged community who figure in the news only when a major calamity befalls them or when they migrate to India in large numbers to escape starvation and persecution. West Pakistan has been thoroughly denuded of Hindus and Sikhs and we have the testimony of Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Z. A. Bhutto, that not a single Hindu family has been left in the Pakistan-occupied territories of Kashmir. East Bengal is the only region where there is a sizeable concentration of minorities. Out of a population of over 50 million, they number 10 million. But since December 1963, they have been leaving their ancestral homes in such numbers that within the next few years there will be no minorities left in East Bengal also if the exodus is not stopped betimes.

The record of Pakistan would perhaps have been less depressing if it could have moved forward under favourable omens in the first years of its birth. The assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, the sagacious Prime Minister, in October 1951, was a national misfortune. His place was taken by men, most of whom were well-placed opportunists and specialists in preaching separatism and disruption. Though devoid of all ability or inclination to serve the common man, they managed to capture the seats of power and drove the country remorselessly to the verge of ruin. Prime Ministers followed one another in quick succession and retreated into obscurity with equal speed. Khwaja Nazimuddin, Mohamed Ali, Chaudhri Mohamed Ali, H. S. Suhrawardy, I. I. Chundrigar and Sir Firoz Khan Noon, who held the office of prime minister for transitory periods, flitted like phantoms across the Pakistani horizon, gathering, in some instances, greater unpopularity and odium during their return journey to the realm of anonymity.

Pakistan in fact invited military dictatorship. On October 8, 1958, Major-General Iskander Mirza, President of Pakistan, proclaimed the abrogation of the ill-fated constitution that had been introduced in March 1956 and appointed General Ayub Khan as Martial Law Administrator. Iskander Mirza's attack on the prevailing state of affairs in his country was frank and forceful. He had, he said, watched with the "deepest anxiety the ruthless struggle for power, corruption, the shameful exploitation of our simple, honest, patriotic and industrious masses, the lack of decorum and the prostitution of Islam for political ends".

The country's food surplus had been converted into a deficit, involving a heavy drain of foreign exchange on imports. There was a complete lack of restraint in the utterances of politicians, some of whom had been lately "talking of a bloody revolution", while others attempted "direct alignment" with foreign countries that could only be described as "high treason". Parliamentary institutions had been brought into disrepute due to widespread malpractices. The President's proclamation recalled: "Recently we had elections for the Karachi Municipal Corporation. Twenty-nine per cent of the electorate exercised their votes and out of these fifty per cent were bogus votes". The august legislative chambers were often reduced into wrestling arenas, where the honourable members sought to have their own way by sheer physical force. Criticism of the country's foreign policy lacked both in understanding and restraint.

President Mirza went on to say: "Against India, of course, they scream for war, knowing full well that they will be nowhere near the firing line." Stating that a vast majority of the people had lost their confidence in the "present system of government", he announced the following decisions. "The constitution of 23rd March 1956 will be abrogated; the Central and Provincial Governments will be dismissed with immediate effect; the national Parliament and Provincial Assemblies will be dissolved, all political parties will be abolished; until alternative arrangements are made, Pakistan will come under martial law." The President appointed General Mohammed Ayub Khan, Commander-in-Chief, Pakistan Army, as the Chief Martial Law Administrator and placed the armed forces of the country under his command. By making these arrangements, Iskander Mirza

unwittingly paved the way for his own exit. He has settled down far away from his motherland and is now living in comfortable obscurity.

It was felt for some time that military dictatorship had found a hospitable home in Pakistan. During the early years of the new regime, Ayub and his lieutenants worked with missionary zeal to promote reform in their country. The displaced persons were rescued from their wretchedness and were speedily and efficiently absorbed into the life of their new homeland. Some 150,000 landless tenants were settled on more than two million acres of land. Thousands of corrupt officials were sacked, while the pestilential class of black-marketeers and venal politicians were hunted down like vermin. Men who had made large fortunes were forced to disgorge their ill-gotten gains, while a number of them were sent to prison so that they might, if they had any conscience, repent at leisure.

Many observers, Indian, American and European, were deeply impressed with the enthusiasm and earnestness of the new rulers. "One reason for optimism," wrote Averell Harriman, "is the personality of General Ayub himself. I found him an energetic, well-informed man, dedicated to improving the life of his people."¹⁴ Khushwant Singh, the well-known Indian author and publicist, wrote with enthusiasm about the Pakistani President and his colleagues. In two articles, written in January 1960 after meeting Ayub and his men, he declared that the mass of the people heartily welcomed the new dispensation. He recalled: "At a bus stand I heard a woman in veil address a policeman 'Bhai Martial Law, get me a seat on the bus'".¹⁵ Nobody misunderstood Ayub Khan at the time when he told Harriman that in Pakistan "it was not a question of dictatorship *versus* democracy but of survival".

The confidence of friendly countries in the future of Pakistan, which had been rudely shaken by the imbecility of the previous regimes, was restored under the new dispensation. They showed greater interest in its economic plans. The country is currently running the second five-year plan which was inaugurated in July 1960. The plan provides for a develop-

¹⁴ Harriman, who made these observations in an article published in March 1959, is now U.S. Assistant Secretary of State.

¹⁵ *Pakistan Today*, Khushwant Singh, *The Times of India*, January 5 and 6, 1960.

ment outlay of Rs. 2,300 crores, of which about 48 per cent or Rs. 1,095 crores, is being raised through external aid and foreign private investment. As in the case of India, the World Bank has sponsored Aid-Pakistan Consortium, whose total commitments on behalf of the participating countries for the first four years of the plan period totalled 1,600 million dollars. Further financial and technical assistance has been promised to ensure the success of the plan which seeks to raise the national income by 24 per cent during the five-year period.

The outline of the third five-year plan, 1965-70, has been drawn up. The plan involves a total expenditure of Rs. 4,350 crores—Rs. 2,850 crores in the public sector and Rs. 1,500 crores in the private sector. It envisages a rise in the national income by 30 per cent as against the anticipated 24 per cent under the current plan. As in India, Pakistan has taken big strides towards industrial development, but progress in agriculture has by no means been exemplary. Despite the fact that two gigantic barrages, the Ghulam Mohammad and Gidiu Barrages, have been completed, thus making irrigation possible in large areas of cultivable land, the goal of self-sufficiency in food continues to defy the planners as in India.

Besides working for the well-being of his people, President Ayub Khan at first showed great earnestness to promote cordial relations between India and Pakistan. He expressed the belief that Pakistan's over-riding problem was India and that the essential first step in neighbourly relations would be a settlement of the river water question. He indicated to many that met him that agreement on this issue would in fact create a new atmosphere of mutual goodwill and co-operation between the two countries. India heartily endorsed this point of view. If no early agreement could be reached, it was because the rulers of Pakistan had chosen to import politics into what was essentially an economic-engineering problem. David Lilienthal, Chairman of the famous Tennessee valley Authority of the United States, had indicated how the river waters of the Indus basin could be shared by the two countries to their mutual advantage. The indefatigable President of the World Bank, Eugene Black, had offered the good offices of his institution as far back as 1952 for promoting an Indo-Pakistan accord on the question. Thanks to his repeated attempts, to the generosity of friendly countries,

which came forward to finance the construction of the replacement works in Pakistan, and to India's willingness to make a heavy sacrifice, the thirteen-year old dispute was settled in September 1960.

The Indus Water Treaty, which was signed in Karachi on September 19 by Nehru on behalf of India and by Ayub Khan on behalf of Pakistan, is based on the scheme drawn up by the World Bank in 1954 and divides the total waters of the Indus system in the proportion of 80 : 20 between Pakistan and India. Under the Treaty, India has undertaken to allow for all time to come the flow of the three western rivers, namely, the Indus, the Jhelum and the Chenab, to Pakistan. The Indus rises in Tibet and flows for over 2,500 miles until it joins the Arabian Sea, 110 miles south-east of Karachi. The Jhelum, which is to the east of the Indus, rises in Kashmir and has a catchment area of more than 13,000 square miles. The Chenab is the third western river which rises in the Himalayas and flows into Pakistan from Kashmir. It has a catchment area of 10,500 square miles and because of its central position in the fan of the river system, it is called the "jugular vein" of the Indus plain's irrigation.

The Treaty has, however, laid down that the present irrigated areas in India, comprising about one million acres, will continue to receive water from these rivers. She is also entitled to store a total of 2.85 million acre feet of water for various purposes, such storage being mainly on the tributaries of the three western rivers. In addition, provision is made for the development of new irrigation facilities for another seven lakh acres.

The Treaty stipulates that India should continue to supply Pakistan its historic withdrawals from the eastern rivers through the Sutlej Valley canals during the transition period but on a diminishing scale. The transition period is ten years from April 1, 1960. The three eastern rivers are the Ravi, the Sutlej and the latter's tributary, the Beas. India has agreed to make a fixed contribution of Rs. 83.3 crores towards the cost of the replacement works to be built in Pakistan. The amount is payable in ten equal annual instalments to the World Bank which credits it to the Indus Basin Development Fund administered by it.

With the contribution from India and from other participat-

ing countries, namely, Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, the Development Fund is worth Rs. 333.3 crores. This large sum of money, which is to be given to Pakistan over a period of ten years, is to be spent on the construction of irrigation reservoirs and link canals to connect its irrigation works which are at present supplied with waters from the three eastern rivers.

Indian opinion was not wholly pleased with the Treaty since it gave this country only a small share in the river waters, besides calling upon it to make a heavy financial sacrifice. Nevertheless, the late Prime Minister hailed the agreement as memorable "because of the fact that a very difficult and complex problem, which had troubled both India and Pakistan for many years, has been solved satisfactorily". Nehru further claimed that many benefits would accrue from the Treaty and that "greater than the material advantages are the psychological and emotional benefits. It is a symbol of unity and co-operation between the two neighbouring countries". President Ayub Khan suitably reciprocated these sentiments. "I have no doubt," he said, "that if we work in the same spirit and harmony it will promote trust and understanding between the peoples of the two countries."

The goodwill between India and Pakistan, created by the Indus Water Treaty, was, however, short-lived. The basic differences between them on the principles of government, on the treatment of the minority communities, and on Kashmir have remained as irreconcilable as before. It is indeed inconceivable how a commonground can be prepared for them unless Pakistan decides to approach its differences with India on the basis of modern concepts and secular principles. Indo-Pakistani friendship is a necessity of world importance and President Ayub Khan, who has most of the gifts of masterful leadership, can promote such an understanding if only he chooses to rise to the statesmanship of Kemal Ataturk. The Turkish leader had to contend with the problems of a country described as the Sick Man of Europe and yet he brilliantly succeeded in transforming it into a modern State. Besides sending the Califate to its doom, Kemal showed astounding courage in causing a complete breach with the tradition by decreeing in 1928 that the Muslim faith should no longer be the official religion of the Turkish Republic.

He dealt a mortal blow at fanaticism and superstition, the twin enemies of reason and progress, by hounding out of public life the purveyors and propagators of these evils, namely, the mullah, the dervish, the chiromancer, the magician, the dice-thrower and the amulet-seller.

With the decline in the vigour of the Ayub regime, nearly all the old evils, which had put the clock back in Pakistan, have regained their ascendancy in that country's public life. The rapacious fraternity of money barons, comprising a microscopic minority of the population and mostly entrenched in Karachi, has again come into its own and is making immense fortunes at the cost of the community, evidently with the knowledge of the Government. The economic disparity between the two wings of Pakistan, as pointed out earlier, continues to widen, thus causing deeper disappointment and resentment among the neglected and exploited people. Opposition to the Ayub regime has become bold and widespread. The abolition of the martial law, after the inauguration of the new constitution, has not improved matters. The description of the present dispensation in Pakistan by a critic as the "Government of the President, by the President, for the President" is gaining wider currency.

Till recent months, the speeches of Sardar Bahadur Khan, the President's younger brother, both on the floor of the National Assembly and outside, in condemnation of the administration, were often strong and bitter, although some suspected that he was only a stalking horse for his brother. But no such taint of suspicion can attach to the opposition of parties like the National Democratic Front, the Awami Party, the Awami League and the Councillors' Faction of the Muslim League, led by Khwaja Nazimuddin, former Governor-General and Prime Minister of Pakistan.

On April 2, 1964, in a forthright speech in the Pakistan National Assembly, an Opposition member belonging to the Awami League, caused consternation in the ministerial circles by advising the Government to grant adult franchise to its own people before advocating the right of self-determination for the inhabitants of Kashmir. The Foreign Minister, Z. A. Bhutto, is reported to have jumped up from his seat and shouted that such home truths were "highly injurious to national interests".

Six days later, the Speaker of that august body asked Rami-zuddin Ahmed, a former Central Minister, not to make any reference to the success of adult franchise and popular elections in India. The former Minister had called on the Government to ascertain the will of the people on the restoration of democracy in the country and declared with complete confidence that they would eventually have their own way, irrespective of the predilections of the present rulers. A member from Baluchistan asked for autonomy for the various regions of Pakistan and complained that it had been taken away from them "by intrigue and conspiracy". To cap it all, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Abdul Qasem, challenged President Ayub Khan on April 17, 1964, to oppose him in seeking the popular vote "from any constituency in the country on the basis of adult franchise". He threw out this challenge during the first reading of the Constitution Second Amendment Bill.¹⁶

Evidently, a regime deriving its sanction from a bare 80,000 "basic democrats" cannot claim to rest on the consent of the people. At any rate, a considerable section of the population does not want it. Thus, after nearly two decades of independent existence, Pakistan is still in search of a durable political system. President Ayub is really in a fix. While a return to martial law may prove dangerous, the present form of government, with the aid of hand-picked men, is wholly unacceptable to the people. So the quest for a more satisfactory system continues. If it fails, says a writer, the army may step in again and sweep out "constitution and politicians again. The only question is whether President Ayub Khan would again be the man wielding the broom".¹⁷

The Ayub administration is equally unacceptable to the minorities. When the President introduced his scheme of reform and progress, many had hoped that deserving members of the minority community would be given positions of trust and responsibility so that they and their people could serve their motherland with zeal and devotion. There has, however, not only been no such recognition of the rights and privileges of the minorities, but even the sacred duty of giving them protec-

¹⁶ *The Indian Express*, Bombay, April 18, 1964.

¹⁷ *The Economist*, London, March 9, 1963.

tion is not being done by the Government with sufficient responsibility.

The population of the minorities in West Pakistan is negligible but, as we saw earlier, there are still ten million Hindus and other non-Muslims in East Bengal. Their persistent efforts to integrate themselves into the national life of their country have ended in total failure. They are under a heavy shadow of suspicion and nothing that they say or do to prove their loyalty to their country can win for them the confidence of their Government. Regarded as outcasts, excluded from most of the honourable callings, despised and suspected, the minorities are frequently exposed to the blood lust of ignorant, fanatical and murderous mobs.

Even in the days of parliamentary Government, it was impossible for the members of the Congress Party in Pakistan to secure a patient hearing either in the Constituent Assembly or in the provincial legislatures. They had, says Professor Callard, "to contend with a substantial degree of suspicion and hatred towards the religion they professed". Realising the disruptive potency of separate electorates, the Congress leaders pleaded for their abolition, but without success. In 1948, Seth Sukhdev of Sind said: "A staunch democrat would not ask for any political safeguards as against the majority. We would, therefore, demand joint electorates without even as much as reservation of seats. If, as a result, Hindus in Sind are out of the legislatures for some time, the price is worth the experiment."

The leader of the Congress Party, Siris Chandra Chattopadhyaya, was equally emphatic in repudiating the need for separate representation for the minority community. Speaking in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on August 24, 1954, he declared: "I do not consider myself a member of the minority community or of this or that community; I consider myself as one of the seven crores of Pakistanis. I do not want any special rights. I do not want any privileges. I do not want reservation of seats in the legislature. I say frame the laws for me which affect everything equally." In not asking for separate treatment, the Congress leader was demanding the impossible! It was indeed impossible for the rulers of his country to forget that he and his community belonged to a separate "nation".

The constitution-makers were convinced about the unwisdom

of abandoning the wedge of religious representation, which had been employed with such devastating effect by the British Indian Government. In fact, the rulers of Pakistan made the weapon even more dangerous by extending the principle of sectional representation to the Scheduled Castes and hoped to succeed with their handiwork where the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, had failed in 1932. The Scheduled Castes were classified as a community distinct from the rest of the Hindus for purposes of representation in the legislatures.

Let Professor Callard speak about the intention behind such a disruptive measure. "This division," he writes, "serves to focus attention upon the inferior position of the Scheduled Castes *vis-a-vis* the caste Hindus and to render less likely the concentration of attention upon issues which unite both sections of Hindus against the Muslim majority. Further, it prevents the Scheduled Castes from looking for leadership to members of the better educated and politically more vigorous group of caste Hindus".¹⁸ After all, "divide and rule" is not the exclusive weapon of any one country or people. The Ayub administration has no use for representative institutions, but their abolition has not improved the status of the minorities.

To quote Professor Callard again: "The Hindu community in East Bengal is likely to diminish in size, in wealth and in talent." This is not surprising because the rulers of Pakistan have firmly turned their back on secularism, democracy and, as the mighty exodus of the minorities from time to time bears out, the rule of law. Theirs is an "Islamic State" and those who do not profess that faith must be content with the position of the lesser breed without the law. It is small wonder that the abortive constitution of 1956 provided for the government of Pakistan on the basis of "Islamic principles of social justice".

In fact, the whole system of administration was to be so ordained as to enable the Muslims "individually and collectively to order their lives in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam, as set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah". The President of Pakistan was to be a Muslim. Safeguards for the minorities and their representation in the legislatures and the services were written into the constitution, but few took such provisions seriously.

¹⁸ *Pakistan: A Political Study*, p. 247.

Despite its obvious partiality for the Muslims, the constitution failed to win the approval of the theologians, who asserted with all the weight of their learning, that the sacred texts did not countenance the exercise of effective power by non-Muslims. They quoted Surah V, 51, which reads: "O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends one to another. He among you who taketh them for friends is (one) of them."

Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, an authority on Islamic literature, maintains that the services of non-subscribers to Islamic ideas may be "utilized in the administrative machinery of the State, but they cannot be entrusted with the responsibility of framing the general policy of the State or dealing with matters vital to its safety and integrity".¹⁹ In other words, however patriotic, able and gifted one may be, one cannot aspire to gain an exalted position in Pakistan, an Islamic State, unless one is a Muslim. If such interdictions on grounds of religion were to be extended to other countries, the late John Kennedy, a Catholic, would never have been allowed to become the President of America.²⁰

Condemned to lead animal existence ever since the partition of India, the minorities of Pakistan have failed to improve their

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 234.

²⁰ In contrast, the Indian Constitution is a truly democratic instrument which makes no distinction between man and man. The secularism of India is best borne out by the composition of her legislatures, of the Central and State Cabinets and of the services. Dr. Zakir Hussain, the Muslim Vice-President of the Indian Union, may well become the President after Dr. Radhakrishnan's retirement. The late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the Union Education Minister till his death. His place was taken by another Muslim, M. C. Chagla, in November 1963. It was in the fitness of things that Chagla, who was the Chief Judge of the Bombay High Court and India's ambassador at Washington before his present appointment, defended India's stand on Kashmir at the United Nations in February and May 1964. Professor Humayun Kabir is another active and prominent Central Minister.

Muslims are highly honoured in many other walks of life. They are in large numbers in the Indian film industry, while they hold pride of place in the domain of music. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, the veteran vocalist, and Ali Akbar Khan, the renowned instrumentalist, for example, are lionised and generously patronised by all classes of Indians.

Another noteworthy fact about India's secularism is that Muslim dignitaries are invited to preside over Hindu religious institutions. For instance, in November 1963 Dr. Zakir Hussain addressed the Vishwesharanand Vedic Research Institute at Hoshiarpur on the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary. President Aref of Iraq, who visited India in March 1964, declared that the fifty million Indian Muslims "enjoyed the fullest freedom of religious faith and worship" in their country "on the basis of complete equality under the law".

position even under the Ayub dispensation. The new constitution, announced by the President on March 1, 1962, declares unconditionally that no law should be repugnant to Islam and that the President of Pakistan must be a Muslim. Manzoor Qadir, who supplies the intellectual ballast to the present regime, had stated firmly that it was wrong to talk of Pakistan as an Islamic State, but this competent Minister changed his mind completely in one year. Ironically, his retraction was made in the same hall and practically before the same audience at Karachi. The abandonment of secular ideals has put a premium on fanaticism and encouraged the propagation of intolerance both by the press and by religious institutions. The Jamat-i-Islamia, organised by Maulana Madoodi, has gained considerable influence and support in the universities of Lahore and Karachi, the principal centres of education in West Pakistan. The Jamat is certainly not a forward-looking body.

For many decades till the division of India in 1947, East Bengal supplied many outstanding leaders who enriched the country's life by their contribution to law, science, education, politics, art and literature. But today that once vast seed-bed of ability and talent presents the spectacle of a social wilderness, with the minorities, comprising Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, living in constant dread for their safety and honour. Noted for centuries for communal harmony and goodwill, East Bengal lost this supreme blessing from the day the two-nation theory became the war-cry of the majority community. The tragedy of Noakhali in October 1946 became a prelude to many more savage attacks on the minorities who are now faced with the terrifying prospect of being thrown out of their ancestral hearths and homes *en masse*.

It is, however, idle to imagine that such frightfulness against the helpless minorities can be practised indefinitely with impunity. The problem of the minorities in the Indian sub-continent is an extremely serious one, involving the safety and future of some 62 million people. Despite its gravity, the problem will, however, continue to defy any rational solution so long as one country persists in its attitude of intransigence, while another is equally misguided in its altruism. It is the conflict in their basic approach that accounts for the failure of the Delhi discussions in April 1964 between the Home Ministers

of India and Pakistan. Any number of such conferences on the minorities will prove equally abortive so long as Pakistan insists that the issue should be settled on its own terms.

The theft of Prophet Mohamed's hair from the Hazratbal shrine at Srinagar in December 1963 was evidently due to the bungling on the part of somebody in Kashmir. It was no part of Rawalpindi's business to work itself up into a mighty fury on that account and to provoke a savage holocaust in distant East Bengal against the helpless minority community there. Neither the public statements of President Ayub Khan on the episode nor those of his over-zealous Foreign Minister, Bhutto, were models of moderation. The controlled press, so obsequious to the military regime, is allowed unlimited freedom to mislead public opinion concerning India and the minorities in Pakistan.²¹ It published the most mendacious and inflammatory reports about the theft of the relic and persisted in its misleading propaganda even after the hair was recovered and restored to the shrine. The campaign against the helpless Hindus of East

²¹ The Press in West Pakistan specialises in preaching *Jehad* or religious war against India. The Indian people are repeatedly warned that in the event of a war between the two countries, the banner of Pakistan will flutter proudly on the ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi! The phobias of *Dawn*, the influential English language daily, are as many as they are incurable. According to it, the Hindu intellectuals are no better than cavemen!!

Canards are *Dawn's* speciality when it concerns India. For instance, on April 14, 1964, it published a "report" under the banner headline "Murder Plot against Sheikh Abdullah". The so-called despatch declared that there was "a conspiracy against Sheikh Abdullah's life" and that "at least one Indian Minister was involved". The Kashmir leader, who had been released earlier, went all over the country in April and May and met as many leaders and others as he chose without risking even a cuticle of his body.

Dawn's tirade against Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the Bhoodan leader and the modern Francis of Assisi, is a true measure of its calibre. A scholar and a man of deep piety, Bhave has written copiously on religious matters, including an appreciative commentary on the tenets of Islam. The bigots cannot reconcile themselves to the thought that a Hindu should venture to write on their religion. Demanding that Bhave should not be allowed to touch the soil of East Bengal during his walking tour of West Bengal, the paper asked editorially on August 6, 1962, "whether a man who has been guilty of such an unforgivable crime against Islam should be allowed to set foot on Pakistan's sacred soil".

Intolerance manifests itself in strange ways. Lord Altrincham, the outspoken British Peer, who suggested the erection of a London memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, called him "the greatest man the world has known since Christ". This was too much for a Pakistani journalist in London who regarded Altrincham's tribute to Gandhi as an outrage on the sentiments of the four hundred million Muslims, including the eighty millions of Pakistan! According to this objector, the only great man in the world was Prophet Mohamed.

Bengal was joined by a powerful coterie in the province. These influential men, consisting mostly of non-Bengali Muslims and including a good number of Government dignitaries, were deeply interested in driving a permanent wedge between the Hindus and Muslims so that the will of the native population to resist the exploitation of their province by the outsiders might be destroyed. They, therefore, deliberately inflamed the minds of the fanatics against the minorities of East Bengal by spreading the canard that the Hindus were responsible for the disappearance of the Prophet's hair. What followed was a holocaust of unprecedented ferocity.

The story of the sufferings of the minorities of East Bengal since December 1963 has still to be written in all its ghastly detail. There is, however, no doubt that the role played by the Government of Pakistan and the press of the western zone in the episode of the missing relic gave immense strength to the arm of the persecutor who murdered, raped and looted at will without any fear of the law or of the God that made him. Men, women and children were massacred in their thousands in places like Khulna, Narayanganj and Dacca, the capital of the province. According to the testimony of an American Peace Corps nurse, published on January 22, 1964, more than one thousand persons, consisting mostly of women and children, were killed in Dacca alone. The violence was widespread and ruthless and estimates of the extent of the loss of life and property are bound to vary in the absence of any systematic and impartial investigation.

According to the author of the booklet *Inside Pakistan*, being an account of the happenings in East Bengal after a visit to it, the Editor of the *Pakistan Observer*, put the number of killed at 6,000 and of the injured at 3,000. The destruction of property amounted to Rs. 25 million. We learn from the same source that a good number of Bengali Muslims, including college students and professors, boldly condemned the atrocities perpetrated on the minorities and gave protection to many families at great risk to their own lives. Twenty-two such noble-minded Muslims heroically perished in the flame of their co-religionists' fanaticism, greed and lust. The press of East Bengal, consisting of dailies like the courageous *Sangbad*, *Ittefaq* and the *Pakistan Observer*, expressed their uncompromising op-

position to the persecution of their fellow-countrymen. But theirs was a cry in the wilderness.

With none to protect them, the defenceless minorities inevitably opted for the only course open to them, namely, to flee to India. In a statement to the Parliament on March 2, 1964, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Mrs. Lakshmi Menon, disclosed that the exodus of the Hindu and Christian members of the minority community from East Bengal was due to "organised large-scale looting, arson, kidnapping and forcible occupation of their lands by the members of the majority community with the connivance of the Pakistani police and the village defence corps known as the 'Ansars'".

The incriminating evidence against the Pakistani authorities is so very overwhelming that even Bhutto, the Foreign Minister, who specialises in proving that black is white, was forced to admit that the flight of the Christian population from East Bengal was the result of the "acts of high-handedness" on the part of his co-religionists. His understatement could not, however, conceal the magnitude of the crime that was committed against a helpless and unoffending population. Mehr Chand Khanna, till recently India's Minister for Rehabilitation,²² who made a personal study of the condition of the displaced persons that poured into Assam, West Bengal and Tripura, was informed that six months before their expulsion, the members of the minority community were told that, while they could plough and sow in their fields, they would not be there to reap the harvest.²³ There was thus a carefully concerted plan to uproot the minorities from their ancestral homes.

The eye-witness accounts of the persecution of the minorities in East Bengal published by foreign newspapermen and missionaries are of inestimable value to students of contemporary happenings in Pakistan. Father Buccieri, an Italian missionary, and Rev. Julius Downs and Rev. James Wood, the American Baptist missionaries, were among the servants of God whose hearts bled at the sight of so much savagery and suffering. The sixty-two-year old Rev. Girish Chisim, who worked for the Bethel Mission in the Mymensingh district, told the Indian camp officials that he and his people had virtually lived under a reign

²² Mahavir Tyagi, an outspoken Congress Member of Parliament, was given this portfolio in April 1964.

²³ *The Times of India*, March 5, 1964.

of terror. A "master plan" had been made to "squeeze out" the minorities from his district. Towards this end, joint action was taken by the East Pakistan Rifles, the Ansars and the "self-styled refugees" from West Bengal.²⁴

Henry Samuel, President of the All-India Council of Christian Leadership, stated in February 1964 that nearly one hundred thousand Christians had fled their homes in East Pakistan to escape "persecution and cold-blooded murder". Rev. N. A. Kirkwood, representative of Indian Christian Societies, whose account of the happenings in East Bengal was published on March 17, 1964, declared: "A book could be written on the atrocities, shooting, bayoneting, baton attacks and raping inflicted by the East Pakistan Rifles and the Ansar personnel of the East Pakistan border forces upon the fleeing refugees." He added: "Stories of looting and of the abduction of tribal maidens by members of the majority community of the area are common."

In an Easter message, Archbishop Lawrence of Dacca, said that he had been aware of the danger to the minorities a long time before and that his appeal to the Government to take suitable preventive steps went unheeded. "I have spent," he declared, "a great deal of time during these months in the border area trying to keep our people from going away. You would not believe that such things could happen in such a short time." This considered opinion of a high church dignitary fully meets the Pakistani charge that India had connived at the emigration of the minorities from East Bengal.

Archbishop Lawrence went on to say: "Never has there been so much real physical and mental suffering in this archdiocese as during the past month or two. The Catholic and other Christian communities in Mymensingh district have suffered very much. They have been the victims of harassment, of mental affliction, of physical mistreatment. Their homes have been violated and their security of body and peace of mind lost."²⁵ Further illustrations are unnecessary.

The picture of Pakistan that emerges from these details is thus unattractive and ominous. Denied all rights, privileges and immunities and persecuted, the minorities of that country have

²⁴ *The Times of India*, March 4, 1964.

²⁵ *The Indian Express*, April 2, 1964.

little reason to rejoice at belonging to a homeland where they are treated either as hostages or as interlopers. The Nehru-Liaqat Ali Khan agreement on the minorities has been treated as a worthless scrap of paper. It is, therefore, a mere matter of time when the entire non-Muslim population of East Bengal will find its way into India. There are not many Hindus left in the rest of that country. P. S. Naskar, India's Deputy Rehabilitation Minister, stated in the Parliament on April 16, 1964, that since the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, nearly nine million persons had migrated to this country. The number of people who left India for Pakistan was about six million.

Apart from the fact that India has had to settle three million more displaced persons, she is faced with the terrifying prospect of finding hearths and homes for another ten million people from East Bengal. According to Naskar, the Union Government had to spend Rs. 500 crores on the rehabilitation of the refugees upto March 31, 1964.²⁶ Indian opinion is unanimous in insisting that the gates of mercy should not be closed against the distressed humanity from across the border, but India does not possess the abounding economy of a country like America. One cannot easily forget the Socialist leader, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia's powerful speech in Parliament on August 21, 1963, when he called attention to the fact that as many 270 million Indian people lived on a bare income of three annas a day. The Planning Minister's revised figure cannot explain away the fact that poverty in this country is still hideous. What with the lamentations of the planners about the tardy growth of the economy and the mounting demands of the Defence Services, the displaced persons can hope to share with the people of this country, not their affluence because they have none, but their many miseries and hungers. An unrestrained influx of refugees may well cause the collapse of the entire economy of the country.

As if the burdens she has had to bear are not sufficiently crushing, India is asked to accommodate hundreds of thousands of Muslim infiltrators from Pakistan. There are 7½ lakhs of such unauthorised persons in Assam alone, while their number is almost equally formidable in Bengal and Tripura. With the economy of their province grievously burdened and exploited by outsiders and being driven by desperate poverty, lakhs of

²⁶ *The Times of India*, April 17, 1964.

East Bengali Muslims force themselves upon the neighbouring States, bringing serious political and economic problems in their wake. Rawalpindi's assertion that such trespassers are India's own nationals is absurd. The fact that the Burmese Government has also to contend with the problem of Muslim infiltrators from East Bengal, numbering some four lakhs, thoroughly exposes the fallacy of this contention.

Parliament and public opinion in India are firm in demanding that such unauthorised persons should be sent back to their country, no matter what Pakistan says or does about it. Their continued presence in the country not only imposes a grievous burden on its economy, but also poses a serious threat to its security. The fifth column activities of many of them have made the need for their prompt expulsion imperative.²⁷ Hem Barua, the vigilant Member of Parliament from Assam, has urged the Indian Government to give up its "myopic vision" on the issue of the minorities and to take early and effective action to expel the Pakistani intruders from his State. He says: "Very soon Assam will be converted into another Kashmir. Ayub has his eyes not only on Kashmir, but also on Assam. In his recent broadcast he made a pointed reference to this item."²⁸ Belonging to the threatened State, Hem Barua ought to know what he is talking about. H. V. Kamath, another hard-hitting Member of Parliament, is of the same opinion. In his presidential address to the all-India convention of East Pakistan minorities held at New Delhi in April 1964, he declared: "It must not be forgotten that this planned infiltration is not only in pursuance of the Pakistan Government's plot to plant spies and agents in those areas, but also is linked with the darker design of trying to annex Assam by converting it into a Muslim majority region."²⁹

²⁷ Burma is faced with a similar problem, though on a much smaller scale. According to the Burmese press reports, nearly four lakh Pakistani Muslims have moved into that country illegally. The intruders are "always controlled by men behind the scene" and are required to carry out the tasks assigned to them. A large number of them, says the Burmese language paper, *Rangoon Daily*, have been interned and fed in the Akyab prison at State cost, as Pakistan refuses to recognise them as its citizens! The Burmese Government has begun to worry about the consequences of such unauthorised influx of destitute foreigners to its country's security.

²⁸ *Janata*, April 19, 1964.

²⁹ *Janata*, May 10, 1964. I have made a brief reference to this subject in an earlier chapter.

Thanks to the imbecility of the Indian Government, subversive activities in the country have become widespread and brazen-faced so that a feeling of distrust against the members of the minority community as a whole is on the increase. In Madras, the Chief Minister, M. Bhaktavatsalam, felt constrained to warn the Muslim League against its "treacherous" campaign against the country and called the attention of the State legislature to the party's habit of shouting the slogan "Pakistan Zindabad".³⁰ Earlier in the same month, the Congress President, Kamaraj, expressed "grave concern over the growing espionage and fifth-column activities" in the country and said that they posed a greater danger to it than that caused by the open hostility of China and Pakistan.

In the border villages of Rajasthan, which has a 640-mile long frontier with Pakistan, there has been a sizeable increase in the Muslim population. The warning given to the State Government about this ominous development was not taken in good time. "There is evidence," says a newspaper correspondent, "that many Pakistanis have been staying on in Jaipur, Ajmer and other places long after their visas have expired. In Ajmer, a Pakistani national was elected to the municipal board some months ago."³¹ On March 30, 1964, sensation was caused in the Rajasthan Assembly when Opposition members disclosed that Pakistani textbooks were being taught in certain schools in the border towns and villages of the State. One such book was actually produced in the House to prove its anti-national and pro-Pakistani bias.

To give one more example. Uttar Pradesh, the home province of the late Prime Minister, has long won notoriety as the hotbed of anti-Indian intrigue and activity. On March 30, 1964, many members of the State legislature bitterly complained against the inability of the Government to unearth and suppress the numerous arsenals that had been secretly set up by the agents of Pakistan and China in a number of U.P. towns. In the same month, one such arsenal was discovered in Lucknow, the State capital. The State, it was pointed out, was infested with spies, for whom regular training centres had been started in half a dozen towns!³²

³⁰ *The Hindu*, March 31, 1964.

³¹ *The Times of India*, Rajasthan letter, May 9, 1964.

³² *The Times of India*, April 1, 1964.

It is against the background of Pakistan's ill-treatment of its minorities and their cruel expulsion from their homeland, the intrusion of hundreds of thousands of unauthorised persons into this country, leading to the deprivation of the means of livelihood to the local population, the unbridled anti-national activities on the part of a section of the Indian Muslim community, with and without the active connivance of outsiders, and the strangely supine behaviour of the State and Central Governments even in the face of the growing danger to national safety and integrity, that the communal riots in India in early 1964 should be studied. The riots in Calcutta, provoked by the fifth column elements in the city, were as brutal and destructive as in East Bengal. The outburst of communal frenzy in the steel towns of Jamshedpur and Rourkela and in a few other places was noteworthy as much for its savagery as for its suddenness. No right-thinking person in India endorses such reprisals, involving the death of innocent persons. Despite its lethargy and inefficiency in other matters, the Government promptly suppressed the rioting.

Such outbursts of communal frenzy have set many people thinking furiously about the future of the country as a secular State. Though intemperately phrased, Frank Anthony's forthright attack in Parliament on the growth of intolerance in the country is a welcome warning to the Indian people about the dangers of departing from the norms of right conduct. The Sarvodaya leader, Jayaprakash Narayan's plea to his countrymen not to delude themselves with "moral smugness" is equally relevant. On April 26, 1964, he and four other social workers stated: "Atrocities have been committed in India that are as bestial, shameful and unthinkable as any committed elsewhere." In an article on Kashmir, suggesting his own solution to the problem, Jayaprakash Narayan reiterated the truism that "neither India nor Pakistan can live and grow unless there is friendship and co-operation between them".³³

It is, however, obvious that any realisation of this goal, so devoutly desired by the saner elements in both countries, will be possible only if Pakistan agrees to abandon the two-nation theory and integrates its minorities into the life of the country as its honoured and trusted nationals. If this is not done and

³³ *The Hindustan Times*, April 20, 1964.

if persecution ends in the eventual evacuation of ten million non-Muslims from East Bengal, a situation may arise when it will become impossible for the Indian Government or for any human agency to control it. In that event, there is likely to be an irresistible demand not only for making a thorough and world-wide exposure of the persecuting policies of Pakistan, but also for the cession of territory to settle the displaced persons from that country. The Rehabilitation Minister, Mahavir Tyagi, declared at the Bombay session of the All-India Congress Committee on May 16, 1964, that India "would have to ask for land, approximately two districts from Pakistan", if the influx of the refugees from that country continued unabated.³⁴

Since Pakistan will undoubtedly reject any such territorial claims, public opinion in India may be eventually forced to the conclusion that, after all, the prescription of Jinnah and Khali-quzzaman, namely, an orderly exchange of populations offers the only solution to the problem of minorities.³⁵ Resolute action on the part of the Government, and not woolly idealism, is thus the supreme need of the hour for dealing with this serious issue. In the absence of any such action, nothing is more futile or fantastic than to chastise the natural reactions of the Indian people to the suffering and humiliation of millions of unoffending men, women and children pouring into their country in a state of complete destitution and degradation.

³⁴ Many Opposition members in the Indian Parliament have already asked the Government to demand from Pakistan the surrender of a sufficiently large tract of land for occupation by the displaced persons. After visiting the reception camps in Bengal, a prominent leader suggested in May 1964 that the East Bengal districts of Khulna, Jessore and Rajshahi should be taken from Pakistan for the purpose. At its forty-eighth session held in Sholapur in the same month, the Hindu Mahasabha urged the Government to arrange for an exchange of populations as a permanent solution to the problem of minorities in the two countries.

³⁵ On November 25, 1946, Jinnah suggested that the authorities, both Central and provincial, "should take up immediately the question of exchange of populations" to avoid what he called the "horrible slaughter" of the minorities in the Indian sub-continent.

Sardar Patel made precisely the same suggestion on September 30, 1947, when he addressed a mass meeting at Amritsar. He was, he said, quite certain that India's interests lay in "getting all her men and women across the border" and sending out all Muslims from East Punjab. "We could then settle down to the tremendous task of repairing the damage done and to make this land a fruitful garden by our labours." Though they were indistinguishable from those of Jinnah, the Sardar's plain words were gall and wormwood to Liaquat Ali Khan. His protests and professions of solicitude for the minorities of Pakistan were brushed aside by the Indian Deputy Prime Minister as so much sanctimonious humbug.

It is perfectly true that two wrongs do not make one right, but it is equally true that popular indignation at the sight of the helpless victims of barbarism, even if it sometimes leads to unlawful behaviour, as it did during the 1964 riots in Orissa and Bihar, cannot be suppressed for ever through police and military action. Communalism should certainly be combated with vigour, but it is folly to ignore the ineluctable fact of human nature. The evil should be attacked at its very source if the desired end is to be gained. In such matters, it is most dangerous for the Government to lose the initiative.

So, neither the secularism of the Government of India nor the gospel of perfection preached by the "other worldly minded" Sarvodaya leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, can meet the requirements of the situation. There is indeed nothing more precious than the safety and well-being of one's motherland. Pakistan's contempt for Indian leaders derives in no small measure from its conviction that, being utopians and prisoners of the idealism of their own fabrication, they are utterly incapable of firm action even against the wrong-doer. Unless this belief is combated, there can be no commonground between the two countries on any vital issue. It is indeed little short of superstition to suppose that indissoluble ties of friendship can be automatically forged between them once the Kashmir nettle is grasped.

16. KASHMIR: WHAT ABOUT IT?

SINCE the withdrawal of British power from India in August 1947, the political status of Kashmir has remained a major issue in dispute between this country and Pakistan. The State of Jammu and Kashmir is situated in the extreme north of the Indian quadrilateral. To the north-east it is bordered by Tibet, to the north by the Chinese Turkestan or Sinkiang and to the north-west by the Soviet province of Turkestan and Afghanistan. To the west its frontiers march with those of Pakistan and to the south with those of Pakistan and India. Before the partition of the sub-continent, this territory of great strategic importance and of singular beauty comprised an area of 84,471 square miles and was, in extent, the largest Indian principality, under British suzerainty. According to the Census of 1941, the State of Jammu and Kashmir had a population of 4,021,616, of whom 3,073,540 or 76.4 per cent were Muslims.¹

The history of Kashmir dates back to many millenniums before Christ. There is abundant material testifying to the great influence exerted by the fair valley on the social and cultural life of ancient India. Students of Indian epics and of other sacred literature of the country find copious references to Kashmir and are impressed by its abiding contribution to our national heritage. Powerful monarchs reigned in the territory and encouraged the creation of enduring works of art and literature. The great temple at Mattan was built by Raja Rama Deva, while the splendid city of Srinagar was brought into existence by Raja Pravarsena. As we march down the corridor of time, we find this celebrated land of snow, of towering mountains, of deep valleys, and of flowers and sunshine, lying helpless and prostrate under the heel of the invaders.

Kashmir was among the first Indian provinces to fall a victim to the ruthless raiders from the north-west. Mahmud of

¹ The latest census figures for the entire State cannot be given, as part of it is under the occupation of Pakistan and China. In 1961, the population of the Kashmir State in India was 3.5 million.

Ghazni set an example in unbridled intolerance and savagery. The idol-smashing ecstasies of the Sultan, described by the great American author, Will Durant, as a "magnificent thief", were influenced in no small measure by the knowledge that the poorly-defended temples of India abounded in wealth. For his acts of spoliation and wreckage, Mahmud was acclaimed as a *Ghazi*! History has repeated itself in all its pitilessness. The wild men from the frontier, who desecrated the smiling valley of Kashmir in October 1947, were praised by the rulers of Pakistan as great crusaders against the so-called Dogra tyranny!! While in the past, the heroic defence of her homeland by Rani Didda gave no security to her successors from further invasions, the shield of free India has proved strong enough to save the Kashmiris from the humiliations and horrors of aggression and enslavement.

Kalhana, the author of the famous work *Rajatarangini* (12th century A.D.), wrote feelingly about the evil days upon which his dear homeland had fallen. He described the barbarous mountain hordes that descended upon the valley thus: "They are well skilled only in burning, plundering and fighting." Perhaps, those men were the progenitors of the armed looters that fell on Kashmir in 1947. The State enjoyed a long spell of peace under the Moghuls whose passion for laying out gorgeous gardens found full scope in the lovely valley. Jahangir built the famous terrace gardens at Verinag, Achibal, Nasim and Shalimar. Shah Jahan, the Magnificent, greatly added to their beauty.

The dissolution of the Moghul Empire saw the extension of Sikh rule to Kashmir which experienced no serious alarms and excursions till 1846 when the great realm founded by Ranjit Singh collapsed under the hammer-blows of the East India Company. Finding the Lahore treasury empty, the impecunious Company Government received one million sterling from Raja Gulab Singh, Chief of Jammu, and in return conferred on him and his successors the right of hereditary rulership over the territories comprising the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The transaction was ratified by the Treaty of Amritsar on March 16, 1846.

In a vain attempt to strengthen its tenuous case, Pakistan has been repeatedly calling attention to this Treaty on the ground

that its provisions are an outrage on human dignity. There cannot be any doubt that it was an infamous agreement, but the history of princely India abounded in such instances. The ancestor of the Nizam of Hyderabad was a foreign adventurer, while the Nawabs of Tonk and Jaora traced their descent to the notorious Pindari bandits, Amir Khan, and his brother-in-law, Ghaffar Khan.

There is an obvious arbitrariness in compressing the long history of Kashmir into a few hundred words, but it is a striking characteristic of its people that they have not allowed the bonds of kinship that unite them to be weakened by any disruptive influences. The majority of the Kashmiris are converts to Islam, but they have retained many of the old Hindu customs. "In the middle nineteenth century," wrote Nehru, "the Hindu ruler of the State found that very large numbers of these people were anxious or willing to return *en bloc* to Hinduism. He sent a deputation to the pundits of Benares inquiring if this could be done. The pundits refused to countenance any such change of faith and there the matter ended."²

This episode is recalled in order to emphasize the fact that there is a natural harmony among the people of Kashmir who refuse to be divided in the name of the so-called "two-nation" theory. A striking demonstration of their oneness was given by them during the anxious days that followed the theft of Prophet Mohamed's hair from the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar. While a holocaust was stirred up by unscrupulous politicians in distant East Bengal over the episode, the relations between the Muslims and the non-Muslims in Kashmir remained most cordial.

There is ample evidence to prove that Kashmir would have become an integral part of Pakistan by now if only the rulers of that country had shown restraint and sagacity in handling the issue of accession. Its merger into Pakistan would have been automatic if it had been a British Indian province like the North-West Frontier Province, West Punjab, Sind and East Bengal. But being a State, it had to conform to the procedure laid down for the future disposition of the feudatory principalities in undivided India by the withdrawing British power.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, the constitutional position of the Indian States under British paramountcy was *sui generis*.

² *The Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru, pp. 311-12.

They were "States" only in name, as they did not enjoy any of the attributes of independent sovereignty. A new situation arose on account of them after the British withdrawal from the country. The Indian Independence Act, 1947, declared that the suzerainty of His Majesty over the States lapsed from the date of the transfer of power to the sub-continent and that in consequence the relationship that had so long subsisted between the rulers and the Crown also ceased. In other words, all the rights and privileges which the States had surrendered to the Paramount Power were restored to them.

Having discussed the subject at length elsewhere, it is not necessary to examine further the historical untenability of the doctrine of the States' pre-existing independence which the Act of 1947 postulated. It is sufficient to recall that under the law, as it was made and understood, the States, that is to say, their rulers, became sovereign entities after the lapse of British paramountcy so that they were free to remain independent or to join either India or Pakistan. Kashmir, like the rest of the principalities, acquired such freedom of choice.

The Indian National Congress, which had consistently supported the popular movements in the States for reforming their administrations, refused to equate the capricious princes with their States and insisted that the real repositories of sovereignty in them were their people. Consistent with this democratic stand, the Congress declared that in all cases of disputed accession the verdict of the people concerned would be accepted as final. Jinnah and his party, the Muslim League, were wholly uninfluenced by any such considerations. They had done nothing to end the vagaries and the misrule of the princes. Jinnah, with his immense capacity for fishing in the troubled waters, saw in the conflicting British and Congress policies on the States' accession a god-sent opportunity for seeking to annex larger territories to his new Dominion.

He saw no enormity in instigating the rulers of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Junagadh to join Pakistan, although their rightful place was with India. But he could justify his manoeuvre by recalling the provisions of the British enactment on the issue of accession. Under it, the ruler and not the people, was the sole arbiter of the destiny of his State. On the future of Hyderabad, Jinnah's observations were not only revealing but also sub-

versive of India's territorial integrity. "Hyderabad," he declared, "is an independent sovereign State and it is for its duly constituted authority to accede to India or remain an independent dominion." He added: "India should not resort to methods of force, coercion and violence to compel Hyderabad to accede to India, for it is contrary to a high sense of morality, justice and fairplay in dealing with a sovereign independent neighbouring State."

If we consult Oppenheim and other constitutional authorities, it will be abundantly clear that Jinnah, the head of a foreign country, was absolutely wrong in thrusting his oars into the domestic concerns of India. But even assuming that this was not a serious lapse on his part, his views on Kashmir represented a complete negation of his stand on Hyderabad. Evidently, the British doctrine did not suit him in this instance and so he made no bones about adopting the Congress version as his own. While, according to him, the Nizam of Hyderabad and every other prince in India had untrammelled freedom to decide the fate of his State, the Maharaja of Kashmir alone could claim no such right. The Quaid-i-Azam had set his heart on the lovely prize. So, neither logic nor ends and means mattered much to him.

And yet, in spite of the glaring inconsistency of his stand, he would perhaps have gained his end if only he could exercise tact and patience. Maharaja Hari Singh was certainly not an efficient ruler; indecision and sloth were the bane of his life. But few among his benighted fraternity were immune from such infirmities. On the issue of accession, there was, however, every need for him to act with caution. Apart from the fact that Pakistan was still in the making, the utterances and actions of its rulers were not models of moderation. In West Punjab and elsewhere tens of thousands of Hindus and Sikhs were being massacred, while the survivors were being driven out of their homes in their millions. Surely, the Maharaja had every reason to wish for an improvement in the situation before he could take a final decision about his State.

Some writers have expressed the view that Hari Singh ought to have acceded to either Dominion promptly, as most other rulers did, and that his procrastination was really responsible for the future trouble. But there were weightier reasons in

support of what he did. "In existing conditions in the Punjab," writes Lord Birdwood, by no means a friend either of the Maharaja or of India, "an open accession to Pakistan might well have resulted in the massacre and expulsion from the State of its Hindu and Sikh inhabitants. Alternatively, an accession to India meant the signature of the Maharaja's death-warrant so far as his own power was concerned."³

The Maharaja was, therefore, quite right in offering to enter into an interim agreement with the Governments of the two Dominions, leaving a permanent political settlement with either of them to a future date. The Standstill Agreement, offered by him in August 1947 and accepted by Pakistan, would perhaps have led to the eventual accession of the State to that country. It gave Pakistan a firm foothold in Kashmir since the State's postal and telegraphic system came under its control. Besides, the Prime Minister of the State, Pandit Ram Chandra Kak, was "closer to Pakistan than to India in an identity of broad policy".⁴

Throughout that stormy period, the attitude of India was clear. Though invited by the Maharaja, she did not rush to sign the Standstill Agreement. In fact, she had no desire to take any initiative on the future disposition of the State. Under the direction of Sardar Patel, the States Ministry took no action that could be construed, even remotely, as forcing Kashmir's hand on the question of accession. The Governor-General, Lord Mountbatten, went a step further and assured the Maharaja that India would not take it amiss if he joined Pakistan.⁵ In his address to the East India Association on June 29, 1948, Mountbatten said: "Had he (the Maharaja) acceded to Pakistan before August 14, 1947, the future Government of India had allowed me to give His Highness an assurance that no objection whatever would be raised by them." In the same speech, Mountbatten deplored the Maharaja's indecision which, as we saw earlier, was, however, not entirely groundless.

Besides making her own position clear on the future of Kashmir, India gave every encouragement to Sheikh Abdullah, leader of the National Conference, to give guidance to his people on

³ *Two Nations and Kashmir*, Lord Birdwood, Robert Hale, 1956, p. 41.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵ *Mission with Mountbatten*, Alan Campbell Johnson, p. 223. Also *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*, V. P. Menon, p. 394.

the vital question of accession in a manner best suited to their lasting interests. Abdullah, who began his political career in the thirties by organising a movement against the Maharaja's capricious government, was strongly supported by the Congress leaders. Nehru became his intimate friend and played no small part in building up and sustaining his prestige. Abdullah founded the National Conference in June 1939, a secular party devoted to championing the cause of the people. Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas, who later became his violent opponent, and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, till recently the Prime Minister of Kashmir, were among his trusted comrades.

As one who had organised a mass agitation in the State for liberalising the government, Abdullah was eminently qualified to speak on its future. Speaking in the Indian capital on October 21, 1947, he declared that the immediate concern of the Kashmiris was to secure responsible government so that they might be free to consider which of the two Dominions they would do well to join. He applauded the attitude of the Indian leaders towards his party's stand and deplored Pakistan's "reactionary attitude" to the issue of accession.

In a detailed statement six days later, Sheikh Abdullah called attention to the difficulty of making a choice on the question. He, however, asserted that, both economically and politically, it was far more advantageous for Kashmir to make common cause with India. He said: "I advised my people that the question of accession should not be decided immediately and that the first step should be constitutional changes on the basis of responsible government. After that the future relations of Kashmir with India and Pakistan might be determined." It goes without saying that Abdullah made these statements with the full knowledge and consent of the Indian leaders.

Abdullah was equally eager to ascertain Jinnah's reactions to the aspirations of the Kashmiris. Earlier, he had attempted to placate the League leader when he visited Kashmir in May 1944 and stayed in the State for two months. On Jinnah's arrival in Srinagar, Abdullah greeted him as the "beloved leader of the Muslims of India". There was, however, little in common between the two men. Before leaving the State on July 24, the League leader issued a statement in which he bitterly complained about the Sheikh's attitude towards him. The statement

said: "Not only my advice was not acceptable to Sheikh Abdullah, but, as is his habit, which has become second nature with him, he indulged in all sorts of language of a most offensive and vituperative character in attacking me."

The Quaid-i-Azam had evidently a long memory and when three years later Abdullah sent his representatives to him for discussions on the future of his State, the creator of Pakistan flatly refused to see them. "It is not," writes Margaret Bourke-White, "surprising that Mohamed Ali Jinnah should have shuddered at the very idea of a people's 'joint government of the Hindus, Sikhs and the Muslims'. The Quaid-i-Azam had no more love for a people's party than had Maharaja Hari Singh."⁶

Jinnah discovered to his dismay that he could depend neither upon the British method nor on that of the Congress for securing Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. With his hatred for the Hindus now reaching white heat, it was impossible for him to believe that the Maharaja or his Prime Minister, Ram Chandra Kak, would envisage the settlement of Kashmir's future according to his own predilections. With Sheikh Abdullah ranged against him, he was not at all confident that the people of Kashmir would vote in favour of making common cause with Pakistan. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, then Deputy Chief of the Emergency Administration, disclosed that he and another person met the Prime Minister of Pakistan at Lahore in September in connection with Kashmir's future. They were told by Liaqat Ali Khan in the most emphatic terms that his Government would not accept the procedure of referendum in the State. Fearing that the great prize would not be theirs by fair means, the rulers of Pakistan hoped to secure it by other methods.⁷

⁶ *Half-Way to Freedom*, Margaret Bourke-White, Simon & Schuster, pp. 202-03.

⁷ The course of the history of Kashmir would perhaps have taken a different turn if only Jinnah could lower his pride and had made a sincere approach to Sheikh Abdullah and the Maharaja. But he had forgotten the art of bending from the day he realised his great destiny. It meant nothing to him to insult others. Alan Campbell Johnson narrates an incident which gives a revealing insight into Jinnah's frame of mind. "Only today (June 28, 1947) Mountbatten received a letter from Jinnah which provoked the strongest reaction I have ever heard from the usually bland and urbane Ismay. 'It was a letter', he said, 'which I would not take from my King or send to a coolie'." In an article entitled *In Memory of Jinnah*, the *London Economist* declared in its issue of September 17, 1949: "To Cleopatra's nose as a factor in history one should perhaps add Jinnah's pride."

Coercion and terrorism were, therefore, considered a surer way of winning Pakistan's end. In flagrant violation of the terms of the Standstill Agreement and with total indifference to the suffering of the Kashmiri people, all essential supplies to the State from West Punjab, including food and cloth, were stopped. Simultaneously with the enforcement of the economic blockade, border raids were organised against the ill-defended State. In order to save Kashmir from the double calamity of starvation and spoliation, the Prime Minister of the State sent a series of urgent appeals to Karachi requesting that the terms of the Standstill Agreement be scrupulously honoured by Pakistan. The long drawn out correspondence that passed between the two governments in September and October 1947 makes amazing reading. To every complaint lodged by the State authorities, Karachi's stock reply was "We categorically deny"!

Such denials were, of course, useless. By the middle of October 1947, an armed revolt was engineered in Poonch by Pakistan which gave a liberal supply of arms and ammunition to the insurgents. The Maharaja, who did not have sufficient forces both to quell the uprising and to stem the tide of invasion by the tribesmen from the frontier, telegraphed to Karachi on October 15, suggesting an impartial enquiry. He also made it clear to the Pakistani authorities that if their help to the lawless elements was not stopped forthwith, his Government would be reluctantly compelled to "ask for assistance to withstand the aggressive and unfriendly actions of the Pakistan people along our border".

Pakistan's reactions to this valid protest were on familiar lines. In his telegram of October 19 to Srinagar, Liaquat Ali Khan declared that there was "mounting evidence of ruthless oppression of Muslims in Kashmir by armed Dogra gangs and non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan". He, however, conceded the need for an investigation, but before any useful steps could be taken in that direction the valley of Kashmir was exposed to full-scale invasion by the men from the wilds of the North-West Frontier.

The armed invaders, who at one time numbered 100,000, poured into the valley with the active support of the Government of Pakistan. They were hospitably entertained, armed with modern weapons, and liberally supplied with artillery and Mark

V-mines. They mustered strong at their main bases in Pakistan, namely, Shakargare, Sialkot, Wazirabad, Gujrat, Lalmusa, Jhelum, Rawalpindi and Abbottabad. Arms were supplied to them in those towns before daylight directly from the front steps of the Muslim League headquarters.⁸ An American adventurer, who served in the "Azad Kashmir" forces for a few weeks, told Robert Trumbull of the *New York Times* that petrol, ammunition, food and camp administrative services were supplied to the tribesmen through the simple process of official "loss". The Chief Minister of the Frontier Province gave his "blessing and unqualified assistance" to the invaders in the belief that tribal action would "force accession to Pakistan on the Maharaja".⁹

Despite such overwhelming evidence, Pakistan categorically repudiated its complicity with the invaders. Liaqat Ali Khan declared: "As regards the charges of aid and assistance to the 'invaders' by the Pakistan Government, we emphatically repudiate them." Forgetting such emphatic denials on behalf of his Government, Jinnah suggested to Mountbatten soon after Kashmir's accession to India that there should be a simultaneous withdrawal of armed forces from the two sides. Commenting on this, Campbell-Johnson writes: "When Mountbatten asked him to explain how the tribesmen could be induced to remove themselves, his reply was 'If you do this I will call the whole thing off', which at least suggests that the public propaganda line that the tribal invasion was wholly beyond Pakistan's control will not be pursued too far in private discussion."¹⁰

The rulers of Pakistan showed equal indifference to truth when they described the invaders as a "fiercely freedom-loving" people who had gone into Kashmir with the noble object of "liberating" their co-religionists from the "tyranny" of the Dogra ruler and his troops. The invaders were, however, plain plunderers who were lured into the valley by loot and women. Armed with modern weapons and led by trained officers and confronting no effective opposition, the disciplined attackers made a swift progress towards Srinagar. Uri was captured on October 26, 1947, while Baramula fell the following day. Barely seventeen miles from the capital, Patan also fell into their hands.

⁸ *Half Way to Freedom*, Margaret Bourke-White, p. 208.

⁹ *Two Nations and Kashmir*, Lord Birdwood, pp. 54-55.

¹⁰ *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 229.

Flushed with their easy victories, the cruel invaders inflicted unspeakable atrocities on the helpless inhabitants, an overwhelming number of whom were their own co-religionists. Women were captured in large numbers and were held in duress at Alibeg "in terrible conditions". Originally, says an official document, Alibeg had one thousand women, of whom only a couple of hundred survived. At Baramula, the 'liberators' played an even more meritorious role by thoroughly annihilating the local population so that only one thousand out of 14,000 persons survived to tell the world how well they were "protected" by their co-religionists from "Dogra tyranny". Also in this small town, the armed marauders entered the Catholic convent, killed the Mother Superior and an English family who were taking refuge with the nuns.¹¹ Lord Birdwood, who has made no attempt to conceal his predilections for Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, has this to say about the freebooters: "By 25th October 1947 the tribesmen had advanced up the Jhelum Valley to Uri, destroying the Franciscan St. Joseph's Convent at Baramula as they advanced. Drugged with past success, all their wild, adventurous savagery was let loose and, with the prospect of the rich Jhelum Valley ahead as the prize, they terrorised the hamlets and villages which cluster along the familiar road to Srinagar."¹²

The testimony of Sheikh Abdullah was equally decisive. Describing the invaders as "criminals before history", he bitterly complained that they "looted everything and everyone". They dishonoured "even the Holy Quran and converted mosques into brothels". He invited observers from all countries, especially those from the Islamic nations, "to come and see for themselves what the invaders have done" in Kashmir.

It was only when the situation became desperate that the Maharaja applied to India for assistance to save his State from utter ruin. To entitle him to such help, he signed the Instrument of Accession on October 26, 1947, which was accepted by the Indian Government on the following day. Till then, says an official document, "the Government of India had no agreement, military or political, with the State".

With no previous preparation and under conditions of

¹¹ *Indian Summer*, Wilfrid Russell, Thacker, 1951, pp. 157-58.

¹² *Two Nations and Kashmir*, Lord Birdwood, p. 57.

incredible hardship, contingents of Indian troops were hurriedly air-lifted to Srinagar—a feat that has been described by competent observers as “a remarkable hairs-breadth military operation”. In a month’s time, the invaders were forced to retreat beyond Uri, sixty-five miles from Srinagar. The fair valley of Kashmir was saved, but by the time the “cease fire” came into effect on January 1, 1949, a good part of the State had gone into the possession of Pakistan.

In a broadcast on November 2, 1947, Nehru defended the action of his Government and declared: “Not to have taken those steps would have been a betrayal of a trust and cowardly submission to the law of the sword with its accompaniment of arson, rape, and slaughter.” Replying to Liaqat Ali Khan’s allegations against India, the late Prime Minister said: “To accuse us of provocation and aggression when all that we have done is to go to the rescue of a people threatened with loss of life, property and honour, is a singular perversion of truth and reason.” Writing in his weekly paper *New Statesman and Nation* in February 1948, Kingsley Martin, the distinguished British journalist, clinched the issue thus: “There is no possible doubt that if India had not intervened last October, Srinagar and the lovely valley of Kashmir would now be a devastated and blackened ruin.”

India did not, therefore, go into Kashmir in order to aggrandize the territory, but to save it from destruction and dissolution. In fact, as Mehrchand Mahajan, former Prime Minister of Kashmir and retired Chief Justice of India, has disclosed, it was Sheikh Abdullah who prevailed upon Nehru to send troops to the State to protect its people from the tribal and the Pakistani invaders.¹³ There was not the slightest dispute or difference of opinion between the Maharaja and the leading political party in the State on the question of its accession to India. Besides, the Maharaja’s action in committing the destiny of his State to India was perfectly valid and irrevocable. The Instrument of Accession signed by him was exactly like the documents executed by the other members of his Order. In fact, he and he alone

¹³ *Inside Story of Abdullah’s Role in Kashmir’s Accession to India*, Mehrchand Mahajan, *The Sunday Standard*, May 10, 1964. He writes: “It goes to the credit of Sheikh Abdullah that it was at his instance and pressure that India agreed to send its army to Srinagar to confront the raiders, but only after accepting the accession of the State to India, as declared by the Maharaja.”

was constitutionally entitled to sign such an Instrument on behalf of his State.

The Indian Independence Act, 1947, reads: "An Indian State shall be deemed to have acceded to the Dominion if the Governor-General had signified his acceptance of an Instrument of Accession executed by the ruler thereof." The enactment did not envisage any temporary or conditional accession. The territorial integrity of the country would have been reduced to a chimera if there had been any such provision for unsettling settled facts. India abounded in principalities like Kashmir.

It is in this context that we must examine the Maharaja's letter of October 26, 1947, signifying Kashmir's accession to India and the Indian Government's acceptance of the offer on the following day. Nowhere in his detailed letter to Lord Mountbatten did the Maharaja indicate directly or indirectly that the accession he proposed was provisional. And yet, despite the absolute validity of the Instrument of Accession from the legal, moral and constitutional point of view, the Government of India unilaterally and in consonance with the Congress policy, committed itself to refer the issue of the State's accession to its people. "It is," declared Lord Mountbatten in his reply of October 27, to the Maharaja, "my Government's wish that, *as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and its soil cleared of the invader*, the question of the State's accession should be settled by a reference to the people" (Italics mine).

The pledge of the Indian Government, though wholly unnecessary, was thus given to the people of Kashmir and to none else. On no account could Pakistan enter the picture because Kashmir became foreign territory to it from the moment the State acceded to the Indian Dominion according to the prescribed procedure. Nevertheless, at the instance of Mountbatten, India went to the United Nations on December 31, 1947, not to seek the approval of the world body to the Kashmir transaction nor even to elicit its academic verdict against her neighbour, but to invoke its good offices in dissuading Pakistan from pursuing its aggressive designs upon the State. In her complaint to the Security Council, she declared: "Since the aid which the invaders are receiving from Pakistan is an act of aggression against India, the Government of India are entitled, in international law, to send their armed forces across Pakistan territory for dealing

effectively with the invaders." But as such action was likely to precipitate an open conflict between the two countries, she requested the Security Council to call upon the Pakistan Government to prevent its people, including its military personnel, and outsiders from violating the peace and the territorial integrity of Kashmir. It also desired that Pakistan should not give assistance of any kind to elements harbouring hostile intentions against the State.

Far from receiving any justice, India is being continually called upon during the last seventeen years to explain her Kashmir policy before the world body. Like its defunct predecessor, the League of Nations, the United Nations Organisation, is like the fabled emperor without robes. Armed with no sanctions of its own and seeing the advantage of sitting on the fence, the United Nations is in most cases inherently incapable of delivering the goods. Rightly has Kingsley Martin felt constrained to observe on the Kashmir issue that India "deserved to have its appeal honestly considered". Her case was indeed simple. She wanted the vacation of Pakistan's aggression in the State so that she could soon fulfil her promise to its people concerning their future. The resolution of Dr. T. F. Tsiang of China, the then President of the Security Council, put forward on March 18, 1948, offered a good opportunity for grasping the Kashmir nettle, but it was dropped since Pakistan disliked it. The resolution of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan, dated August 13, 1948, shared the same fate for the same reason.

Even the categorical observation of the Commission, following the Pakistani Foreign Minister's belated admission before it, that "the presence of the troops of Pakistan in the territory of the State of Jammu and Kashmir constitutes a material change in the situation" failed to influence the attitude of the Security Council towards the dispute. Pakistan's demand that it should be treated on par with the complainant and that any demilitarisation of the State should be on the basis of a simultaneous withdrawal of troops by the two countries, deserved unqualified rejection by that body since such counter-proposals really meant a lack of confidence in its impartiality to conduct a fair and free plebiscite in the State. Nothing of the kind was, however, done. On the contrary, India was asked to accept duties and obligations wholly unrelated to the merits of the dispute. It

is small wonder, therefore, that nothing came out of the Commission's next resolution of January 5, 1949, although it was formally accepted by both countries. Nor need we be surprised that the subsequent efforts of General A. G. L. McNaughton of Canada, of Sir Owen Dixon, the well-known Australian jurist, of Dr. Frank Graham and others to discover a *modus vivendi* have only ended in widening the gulf between the two countries on the Kashmir question.

The reason for the somewhat partisan role which some of the Western countries, including the United States of America, have chosen to play in the Kashmir dispute, must be properly understood. The position of Britain in particular is most invidious. Having herself laid down in 1947 the procedure for determining the future of the princely States, it is now impossible for her to doubt or to challenge the validity of Kashmir's accession to India. At the same time, India was divided almost entirely on communal grounds. And since the bulk of Kashmir's population is Muslim, Britain feels that Pakistan is not altogether wrong in asking that the State should belong to it.

Besides, the ruling class in England has not forgiven India or the Congress Party for contributing to the dissolution of the mighty British Empire. Reference has already been made to the reprehensible role played by Sir Conrad Corfield, head of the British Indian Government's Political Department, to cause further damage to India's territorial unity. Sir William Barton, another Old India Hand, believed that his long service in this country entitled him to present a blatantly one-sided picture of the Kashmir dispute. Writing in an American Quarterly more than fourteen years ago, he sought to impress upon the reader the gravity of the Indo-Pakistan quarrel by making the astounding remarks that, "should there be a war between Pakistan and India, Soviet intervention on the side of Pakistan is likely". Such was the political prescience of these imperial handymen!

General Gracey, the first Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistani Army, who died in June 1964, made no bones about his partisanship. He was, to quote Lord Birdwood, "most certainly able to identify himself completely with the Pakistani cause. A few minutes' conversation with him was sufficient to convince me that here was a man who would be ready to risk his reputation

for a cause in which he sensed an injustice to the side which fate had chosen for his championship". The author, therefore, maintains that it is "hardly just to blame Gracey for a failure to control the wild hordes of Frontier tribesmen".¹⁴ Apart from such ingrained hostility of the British governing class to India,¹⁵ her policy of non-alignment and Nehru's pronouncements on international affairs, some of which were not altogether flattering to the Western countries, contributed in no small measure to the hardening of British and American official opinion against her on the Kashmir question.¹⁶

Influential support to it at the United Nations and elsewhere has naturally intensified Pakistan's intransigence. Jinnah, who ought to have set an example in moderation and reasonableness, was not loath to employ force to annex Kashmir to his new Dominion. The thought that the State had joined India was maddening to him, especially when he had got ready at Abbottabad to make a triumphal entry into it. Roused to uncontrollable fury by his frustration, he ordered General Gracey, his Commander-in-Chief, to march troops into Kashmir and capture Baramula, Srinagar and the Banihal Pass. He also directed that armed forces should be sent into the Mirpur district of Jammu. We do not know what Gracey, with his open sympathy for Pakistan, would have done against India, but the sobering thought that he would have to confront his fellow-countrymen on the other side, induced him to stall on the reckless directives of the Quaid-i-Azam. Gracey promptly apprised the Supreme Commander, Sir Claude Auchinleck, of Jinnah's wishes. The Supreme Commander flew into Lahore on the morning of Octo-

¹⁴ *Two Nations and Kashmir*, Lord Birdwood, p. 76.

¹⁵ For sheer petty vindictiveness, the Beaverbrook press is unrivalled. Death normally ends all bitterness, but such canons of decency are unknown to the *Daily Express*. With Lord Beaverbrook, his enmity for Nehru and for all he stood for became a disease of the soul. When the entire world mourned the passing of a great leader and champion of humanity, the *Express* chose to describe Nehru as the "Rupert Brooke of politics: a minor man cast in a major role".

¹⁶ In May 1964, the British Prime Minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, considered it necessary to write to Nehru, expressing his regret at India's co-sponsoring of the Iraqi resolution in the United Nations special committee on colonialism, deprecating the British military action in the Aden area. The Indian representative described the British action as "reprehensible and inflammable". India's part in the United Nations on the developments in Southern Rhodesia was equally unpopular with the British. Nehru was, however, not impressed with such protests. At a press conference on May 22, five days before his death, he firmly defended his country's stand on those issues.

ber 28, 1947, and explained to Jinnah in the most explicit terms that any such military adventure on the part of Pakistan would prove disastrous. It was also brought home to the former admirer of constitutionalism that any invasion of Kashmir would in reality mean the violation of Indian sovereignty. Jinnah reluctantly withdrew his orders after listening to these home truths.¹⁷

With Jinnah as their exemplar, the leaders of Pakistan have chosen to make the most astounding statements on Kashmir. The enormity of insulting the people of the State, while at the same time coveting their territory, never occurred to Sir Mohamud Zafrullah Khan when he declared in the Security Council that "*one soldier armed with no more than a bayonet could drive 4,000 Kashmiris in whatever direction he desired*". (Italics mine.) Malik Sir Firoze Khan Noon, one of the many Prime Ministers of Pakistan, declared with absolute finality: "Pakistan without Kashmir is inconceivable." Indeed, unbridled emotion and fanaticism have made any rational discussion of the issue impossible. *Jehad* is the favourite and eternal theme of the Pakistani press and of the religious and political orators. "Our traditions," declares a bellicose divine, "show that we never hesitate to sacrifice our lives and wealth when *Jehad* demands it."

Dr. Gamal-Eddine Heyworth-Dunne writes: "The whole of Pakistan, already a trifle puffed with pride after attaining its independence, now turned against its Indian neighbour with all the animosity and venom at its disposal." He points out that, instead of leaving the Kashmir question to be dealt with at the Government level, "the people have been played upon by agitators to exert pressure in all forms".¹⁸ In a series of articles on the Indo-Pakistan relations, Kingsley Martin mentions again and again how the Pakistanis drive themselves into "hysterical anger" on the Kashmir question. "To talk to Pakistanis," he says, "especially to politicians, is to find oneself battered by waves of confused and baseless propaganda."¹⁹

There is a fallacy in the argument that, because India was

¹⁷ *Auchinleck*, John Connell, 1959, pp. 931-32. Also *The Memoirs of Lord Ismay*, p. 444.

¹⁸ *Pakistan: The Birth of a New Muslim State*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁹ *Hindus and Moslems*, Kingsley Martin, *New Statesman*, February 15, 1963.

divided mainly on communal considerations, Kashmir, with its Muslim majority, should *ipso facto* belong to Pakistan. Neither at the time of partition nor now are all the components of that country reconciled to the present disposition. Only geographical compulsions prevented the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan from continuing to remain with India. The Khan brothers and the famous Baluchi leader, Khan Abdul Samad Khan, were non-communalists *par excellence*, who fought the preposterous two-nation theory with all the unarmed strength at their disposal. In a statement from Peshawar on June 26, 1947, Dr. Khan Sahib declared that since it had been decided to separate his province from India, the only rightful course "left to us is to have a separate sovereign State of our own".

The demand for Pathanistan, revived with vigour early this year, cannot be lightly dismissed. In a remarkable article published in April 1946, the Soviet political *New Times* drew pointed attention to the ethnical similarity of the tribes on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan frontiers. The article said that Afghanistan's "borders include districts in the north which are populated by Turkmenians, Uzbeks and Tafiks, whereas in the south over four million Afghans have been cut off from this country and joined to India". With the certainty of British withdrawal from India, Afghanistan revived her claims on the North-West Frontier Province, but they were ignored. Similarly, discussing the future of his homeland, Baluchistan, Samad Khan declared that the Pathans and his people had many things in common. He, therefore, desired to see "the birth in the N.-W. Frontier of India of two contiguous and martial nations of Baluchis and Pathans, each based on perfect equality and sharing a common language, culture and civilization". Today the Baluchis are paying heavily for entertaining such aspirations. A member of the National Assembly of Pakistan disclosed the other day that Id gatherings in that province were ruthlessly bombed, while other forms of repression were being extensively practised with the object of terrorising the freedom-loving Baluchis into submission.²⁰ The extent of the unrest in

²⁰ M. C. Chagla, leader of the Indian delegation, drew the attention of the U.N. Security Council to these facts on May 7, 1964. He quoted the *Guardian* as saying "An administration typical of good colonial rule and there is a wide gulf between it and the people" (*The Times of India*, May 9, 1964).

East Bengal has already been described at length. So, the assertion that the people in the Muslim-majority regions of the sub-continent are desperately anxious to remain in Pakistan or to belong to it is a mere myth.

Kashmir escaped the grim fate of the N.-W. Frontier Province, Baluchistan and East Bengal entirely on account of the bungling of the Pakistani leaders. It would be tragic if anything were to be done now that would reverse the course of history and expose the State and its people to new hazards and humiliations. As we saw earlier, both according to the British prescription and the Congress formula, Kashmir's accession to India is final and irrevocable. If this view of the transaction is impugned, then we must be prepared to annul the Instruments of Accession signed by a large number of rulers of other States. Maharaja Karni Singh of Bikaner, whose father played a notable part in hastening the integration of princely India, rightly warned on May 10, 1964, that any re-opening of Kashmir's accession would lead to the "weakening and disintegration of India". He pointed out that there was no legal difference between the accession of the Bikaner State and that of the State of Jammu and Kashmir because "the moment the ruler signed the Instrument of Accession it became complete and legally binding on both parties for all times".

Sheikh Abdullah's numerous speeches and statements prior to his arrest in 1953 make it abundantly clear that the accession of Kashmir to India is permanent and beyond cavil. He told an Id gathering at Srinagar in October 1948: "The pledge I gave to Pandit Nehru last year that Kashmir will be a part of India has now become an eternal bond." He added: "It was after fully knowing India's attitude for over one year that the decision for permanent accession was taken—a decision which would affect the destiny of the entire population of the State for generation to come." Speaking in May 1950, he ridiculed the suggestion that Kashmir's accession to India was merely legalistic. On the contrary, it was, he maintained, born out of the free will of the Kashmiris who found in this country the "true image of their own ideals and aspirations". He further said: "This bond of unity between India and Kashmir, this kinship of heart and soul, this ever-growing and ever-strengthening link between the two great people can never be broken."

He clinched the issue of accession on September 23, 1949, when he expressed his complete confidence of winning a majority in the occupied territory if Pakistan agreed to withdraw the so-called Azad Kashmiri forces from there. His challenge was not accepted. Instead, he was called a "fifth columnist" and abused in other choice language! Liaqat Ali Khan, who declared in November 1949 that his Government would wage a hundred years' war against India on the Kashmir issue, chose to indulge in such heroics instead of adopting the simple course of putting the Sheikh's claim to test.

Apart from such weighty pronouncements, the entire policy of the Government of Kashmir under Abdullah's leadership was directed towards ensuring that the bonds between India and the State would remain indissoluble. On April 30, 1951, a Constituent Assembly was convened to frame a democratic constitution for the State, with Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq, the present Premier, as the President of that body. The new Constitution, adopted on November 17, 1956, declared in the most emphatic terms that, having acceded to this country on October 26, 1947, the people of Kashmir were determined to "defend the existing relationship of the State with the Union of India as an integral part thereof". It also said that "the State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India".

The fact that Abdullah was not present at the time does not deprive the affirmation of its solemnity. He indeed was the architect of the Constituent Assembly which had been brought into existence after fair and free elections. Besides, his Government functioned with untrammelled freedom from New Delhi's tutelage in its domestic concerns. In an important policy statement in the Kashmir Constituent Assembly on November 5, 1951, he made the categorical declaration that during its four years' association with India, the State had not felt any interference in the administration of its affairs. No useful purpose can be served by ignoring these basic facts.

India's case in the Kashmir dispute is thus impregnable and yet she has been forced to fight a rearguard action during all these seventeen years. Her hesitations and vacillations are largely responsible for such a sorry state of affairs. It is essential to remember that Kashmir's accession to India is perfectly

valid on the basis of both the British and the Congress formula. The issue could, however, have been reopened and a plebiscite held in the first years of the dispute if only Pakistan had accepted the U.N. Resolutions, the basic feature of which was the directive that it should vacate its aggression in the State. But it funkcd, seeing that it was impossible for it to win a favourable verdict from the people of Kashmir under fair conditions. In view of this, there was every reason for India to announce the closure of the Kashmir question and to refuse to hold any parleys with Pakistan, especially after the ratification of the accession by the State's Constituent Assembly in November 1956.

The futility of conducting any long drawn out negotiations with her neighbour ought to have been evident to her from the outset. Her talks with Pakistan on Kashmir and other related matters in 1962-63 were, however, forced on her by the pressure of events. The United States and Britain, who had come to her aid promptly and generously to face the Chinese menace, persuaded the two countries to meet again with a view to discovering a *modus vivendi*. The good offices of Duncan Sandys, Britain's Commonwealth Secretary, and of Averell Harri-man, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, were reinforced by a joint statement of President Ayub Khan and Nehru on November 29, 1962. In the sequel, Sardar Swaran Singh and Z. A. Bhutto, the Indian and Pakistani Ministers, held six rounds of talks, spread over nearly five months, but they produced nothing.

In a statement in the Lok Sabha on August 13, 1963, Nehru disclosed that Pakistan claimed "the entire State of Jammu and Kashmir, leaving to India, as it happened in a forgotten moment of generosity, an insignificant area in the extreme south, roughly coinciding the district of Kathua". He also stated that the suggestion for the appointment of a mediator was rejected by Pakistan. According to independent testimony, the Indian offer was generous since it provided for the revision of the international line so as to give Pakistan a substantial increase of territory in Kashmir without at the same time radically altering the present position in Jammu, Srinagar and Ladakh. "It is difficult," says Kingsley Martin, "to see that India can make any larger concession. The future of the sub-continent largely depends on whether Pakistan is mature enough to accept this

proposal." Since no such "maturity" was shown by that country, the late Prime Minister felt constrained to announce in August 1963 that "the concessions which we offered to Pakistan are no longer open and they must be treated as withdrawn".

It is a measure of Pakistan's intransigence that, even while the negotiations were in progress, it chose to conclude an agreement with Communist China on March 2, 1963, "settling" the border between occupied Kashmir and Sinkiang. Evidently, the Pakistan leaders did not want to see the irony of an "Islamic State" warmly embracing a cruel, treacherous and godless neighbour. By this agreement, some 2,000 square miles of Indian territory was gratuitously presented to China whose sudden interest in defining this sector of its frontier was a calculated move to undermine the position of this country. As a British journal wrote, "many Pakistanis have hailed their treaty with China more as a telling blow to India than as a useful achievement in itself".²¹ In another article, the weekly warned Pakistan that its cynical opportunism and its studied attempts to embarrass the Western democracies by its open alliance with China might lead to serious developments. It might prove costly to Pakistan to forget that China is "no economic substitute for the United States" and that "experiments in blackmail can end disastrously".²²

So, a vigorous and purposeful drive to present the world with a true account of India's position in Kashmir would undoubtedly have dispelled a good deal of ignorant prejudice that existed and still exists on the subject in many foreign countries. Nor has the Union Government's attitude towards the State and its administration been free from ambiguity. It is because of this that the impression persists among many foreign observers that

²¹ *The Economist*, March 9, 1963.

²² *Ibid*, October 5, 1963. In a joint communique, issued at Rawalpindi on February 23, 1964, at the conclusion of the talks between President Ayub Khan and the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-lai, the two leaders expressed the "hope that the Kashmir dispute would be resolved in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir as pledged to them by India and Pakistan". Commenting on this sanctimonious homily, *The Economist*, in its issue of February 29, 1964, writes. "As an entertaining thought, what now prevents Indians from suggesting that 'the wishes of the people' might also apply in Tibet?" The Indian suggestion will, however, not stop at this. The world would like to know what Pakistan proposes to do with the demand of East Bengal, the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan for self-determination. The world's largest Islamic State will shrink to a negligible size once these just claims are met.

the future of Kashmir is still open to discussion. There has never been any necessity to treat it as a separate entity in the Indian body politic and to assign to it the status of a semi-sovereign unit by making special constitutional provisions for its government.

It is absurd to cast doubts on Sheikh Abdullah's patriotism, but there cannot be any doubt that his great friendship for Nehru and the manifest disinclination on the part of the latter to deny him anything, played no small part in encouraging the Kashmir leader to hold opinions about the status of his State that were wholly unrelated to the realities of the situation. Excessive autonomy bred in the rulers of the State an overwhelming desire to enjoy what Lord Birdwood calls "the material manifestations of power". The Sheikh is said to have led the rest in that direction. Addressing a public meeting on April 10, 1952, he declared that Kashmir's political association with India could only be limited so long as "communalism" had a foothold in the country. Three days later, the late Prime Minister commented on his friend's speech and said that he was not happy about it.

It is obvious that no effective steps were taken by the Indian Government to check Abdullah's incipient aspirations for the political isolation of his State. On the contrary, an "eight-point agreement" was signed by him with Nehru on July 24, 1952, which gave a further stimulus to his new political ambitions. Among other things, the agreement conferred on Kashmir the right to sport a flag of its own for "historical and sentimental reasons". It has been recorded that Abdullah returned to his State with such large concessions like a hero. It stands to reason that he could certainly have been persuaded not to transgress the bounds of moderation in his public utterances if the Union Government or Nehru had remonstrated with him betimes in a sufficiently firm language.

Nothing of the kind was done and the initiative to deal with him was left to his own colleagues. In a joint letter of August 7, 1953, signed by three of them, they told him about the dissensions in his cabinet and about the changes in his policy which, they asserted, had created "uncertainty, suspense and doubt in the minds of the people of the State in general and of those in Jammu and Ladakh in particular". He was arrested at Gul-

marg on August 9 and was removed to Udhampur.²³ After forcing him to bury eleven precious years of his life in inaction, he was set free on April 8, 1964.

It is impossible to defend Abdullah's arrest and detention without trial for such an unconscionably long period. It is no small tribute to his sanity and sagacity that, despite his bitter experience, he has not allowed the iron to enter his soul. But the role he has cast for himself since his release is rather mystifying. "My main aim," he declared in New Delhi on May 2, 1964, "is to find out ways and means of bringing about sanity in the whole sub-continent." His desire to promote concord between India and Pakistan is praiseworthy and no less a person that the late Prime Minister gave him the most categorical assurance that he would receive this country's fullest support in his endeavour. But Abdullah and the world know that Pakistan refuses to countenance any offers of friendship with India unless the "Kashmir question" is settled. And yet he says that the "accession business" is a very "minor point".

The Sheikh is, however, a shrewd man and he knows that his mediatory powers cannot be effective unless he is prepared to make up his own mind on the future of Kashmir. If, after all that has happened, he still believes that the so-called Kashmir question is not yet settled, then there are three alternative ways of "settling" it. The first and the most honourable course to adopt is, of course, to stand firmly by the present arrangement. Less than a fortnight before his death, Nehru told the All-India Congress Committee in Bombay on May 16, 1964, that Abdullah was "wedded to the principles of secularism" and that he did not "wish anything to be done to vitiate these in any way". To quote the late Prime Minister further: "He (the Sheikh) does not believe in the two-nation theory which was the basis for the formation of Pakistan." Such steadfast adherence to secular and democratic principles on the part of the Kashmir leader is in consonance with his well-known utterances and actions before his arrest in 1953.

It is, therefore, impossible for him now to go back upon them

²³ In his biography of Nehru, Prof. Brecher says that Rafi Ahmed Kidwai "engineered" the overthrow of Abdullah in 1953. Jayaprakash Narayan is of the opinion that when the Sheikh was dismissed from his position and detained, "Mr. Nehru happened to know of the event just as any other Indian citizen did". (*The Hindustan Times*, April 20, 1964.)

or to explain them away without compromising his reputation for integrity. None of his utterances of those days gave the slightest indication that the State's accession to India, in promoting which he played such an outstanding part, was only temporary. If it had been so, there would have been no justification at all for the Government and the people of India to make heavy sacrifices in men and money for the defence and development of a territory that would one day cease to belong to them. As Abdullah himself put it so well in one of his speeches at Calcutta in 1950, "to save the life and honour of the Kashmiri people, the youngmen from all parts of India shed their blood. If, after this glorious event, the Muslims of Kashmir wanted to go to Pakistan, the Hindus in India would naturally think that they cannot depend on the four-crore Muslims living here". Much water has certainly flowed under the bridges since these and similar words were uttered, but the fact that such great sacrifices were made out of the profound conviction that Kashmir was and would always remain an integral part of the motherland cannot at any time become out of date or irrelevant. So, remembering his role in the State's accession to India and his contribution to secularism in Kashmir's public life, Abdullah can, if he so chooses, rise again to his full stature as a democratic leader and reiterate his earlier faith in the finality of the State's disposition.

If, however, it is believed that the subjection of Kashmir to the ordeal of a plebiscite is the only way in which Pakistan can be appeased, we must be prepared to open the floodgates of fanaticism which, as many impartial observers fear, may engulf the entire sub-continent. The implications of re-opening the accession issue should be frankly recognised. First, India must be prepared to concede the Pakistani charge that the State's accession to her is "fraudulent" and that it has never been endorsed by its people. Secondly, it would mean the repudiation of the considered opinion of the Government of India and of others, that devices like plebiscite and referendum have long ceased to be relevant in the Kashmir dispute. As far back as May 18, 1955, the correspondent of the *London Times* wrote from New Delhi: "One fact has emerged and that is that a plebiscite as a means for the Kashmiris to express their choice is as dead as all other proposals that have been made in the

past. It has now been decided that, while the future of the State still rests with the people, other means must be devised to find out what they really want.”²⁴ The verdict of the State’s people on the issue was given in no unmistakable terms when their Constituent Assembly ratified the constitution on November 17, 1956.

Thirdly, a plebiscite can be held at this distance of time only by running a grave risk to the peace and tranquillity of the entire sub-continent. Pakistan’s behaviour during the theft of the Prophet’s hair from the Hazratbal shrine at Srinagar in December 1963 furnishes conclusive proof that it will not hesitate to go to any length to fan the flames of fanaticism in its bid to annex the much-coveted prize of Kashmir.

Thoughtful Muslims in India have consistently opposed any move on the part of Pakistan that is calculated to weaken the secular character of this country. As long ago as in August 1951, prominent Muslims, including Dr. Zakir Hussain, addressed a strongly-worded memorandum to Dr. Frank Graham, U.N. Mediator, pointing out that Pakistan’s belligerent attitude on the Kashmir issue was “fraught with the gravest peril to the forty million Muslims of India”. The signatories characterised Pakistan’s solicitude for Indian and Kashmir Muslims as preposterous. Time has aggravated the danger of a holocaust. To quote Kingsley Martin: “A plebiscite is a horrifying idea in the existing circumstances; it would reopen the communal feud which is never far from the surface in the sub-continent.”²⁵

Commenting on some of the recent utterances of Sheikh Abdullah of doubtful validity, Badruddin Tyabji, Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, stated on May 13, 1964, that the “utmost damage” would be done “to the secular conception on the Indian sub-continent” if Kashmir went out of India and joined Pakistan. He feared that under such a dispensation the State would also suffer. “At best, it will become another East Bengal—neither fish nor fowl.”²⁶

The final alternative is to elevate Kashmir to a status which it has not enjoyed before and which it may never be able to

²⁴ *Two Nations and Kashmir*, Lord Birdwood, p. 202.

²⁵ *Hindus and Muslims*, Kingsley Martin, *New Statesman*, February 15, 1963.

²⁶ *The Hindustan Times*, May 14, 1964.

sustain for long. Jayaprakash Narayan is an estimable person who has given up politics to serve his fellowmen through other activities. He and those who share his views believe that the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir can be resolved by widening the area of association not only between the two countries but also between their neighbours. The concept of a confederation, bringing India, Pakistan, Kashmir, Nagaland, Sikkim and Bhutan and presumably a few other countries like Burma, Ceylon, Afghanistan and Iran, into constitutional relationship, is undoubtedly an alluring one. It is of a piece with the world state, so vigorously advocated during the last war and after by thinkers and writers like Bertrand Russell, Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells and Lord Sankey and by Jawaharlal Nehru in our own country.

But confederation is the blue-print for a future date. The fact that even the innocuous C. R. formula, providing for "a mutual agreement" for "safeguarding defence, commerce and communications and other essential purposes" in the event of the division of the country, was angrily rejected by Jinnah ought to have a sobering effect on the enthusiasts for international co-operation. In his last days, Nehru was also presumably toying with the idea of an Indo-Pakistani confederation, but it was given a death-blow by Ayub Khan in May 1964. He firmly ruled out any confederation or federation as a solution to the Kashmir problem and believed that such a step would "ultimately undo Pakistan". Arrangements like these presuppose functional co-operation between the two countries which unfortunately does not exist.

The suggestion that Kashmir should be raised to the status of an independent State, with its integrity and security guaranteed by India and Pakistan, is equally utopian. In May 1949, Abdullah himself rejected it and stated his conviction in the Constituent Assembly in November 1951 that, although independence was a "charming idea", it was totally impracticable. Its experience with "independence" during the few weeks that intervened between the British withdrawal and the State's accession to India, has convinced Kashmir that it is by no means a desirable goal.

The impracticability of an Indo-Pakistani condominium in Kashmir is no less obvious. It is true that in theory the State

can cherish its domestic autonomy in safety if India and Pakistan agreed to protect it from external danger and internal disruption, but the question as to why they should undertake any such responsibility cannot be readily or convincingly answered. The Anglo-Egyptian condominium in the Sudan was an entirely different arrangement and cannot be imitated in the Indian sub-continent without inviting strife and disorder. The overthrow of the Mahdist state in the Sudan by the British imposed upon them the necessity of restoring the Egyptian rule in that country. But since the British occupation of 1882, Egypt itself had become a protectorate of Britain. So, while in law both England and Egypt jointly exercised jurisdiction over the Sudan, the former was the real ruler there.²⁷

India and Pakistan are two mutually exclusive and highly self-regarding sovereign States which cannot be expected to see eye to eye even for the limited purpose of ensuring the success of a condominium in Kashmir, should it be established. Pakistan's resentment at its failure to win the glittering prize will not end by any arrangement that falls short of putting Kashmir in its possession. Nor can India rejoice at any dispensation that reduces to naught all that she did in the State during these seventeen years. Kautilya, the famous Minister of Chandragupta Maurya, has been described by Dr. J. F. Fleet as "the greatest Indian exponent of the art of government, the duties of kings, ministers and officials, and the methods of diplomacy". In his treatise called *Arthashastra*, Kautilya says: "Divided rule or the rule of a country by two kings, perishes owing to mutual hatred, partiality and rivalry." Under such conditions, far from realising its hope of pursuing an independent course in peace, Kashmir may well become the cockpit of competing claims by her powerful neighbours, involving the entire sub-continent in strife and turmoil.

It is absurd to preach prudence or patriotism to Sheikh Abdullah. He is competent enough to see for himself which

²⁷ In September 1898, the relative positions of Egypt and Britain in the Sudan were made perfectly clear to the Foreign Minister of the former country. He was told that "Her Majesty's Government consider that they have a predominant voice in all matters connected with the Sudan, and that they expect that any advice which they may think fit to tender to the Egyptian Government in respect to Sudan affairs will be followed". (*British Policy in the Sudan, 1882-1902*, Mekki Shibeika, Oxford, 1952, p. 409; also *A Modern History of the Sudan*, Dr. P. M. Holt, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961, p. 109.)

of the three alternatives discussed here is the best concerning Kashmir. There is much force in the observation of G. M. Sadiq, the present Premier of the State, that since Pakistan's hatred for India is deep-rooted, even a settlement of the Kashmir dispute cannot end its hostility towards this country. Many of Ayub Khan's public utterances are enlightened, but he is not strong enough to overcome the obscurantism and intolerance that pervade his country's polity. The 'two-nation' doctrine and the concept of an 'Islamic State' are the foundations upon which the edifice of Pakistan rests. Perhaps, the two countries will be able to come together provided India agrees to surrender Kashmir, receive all the non-Muslims from that State and from East Bengal, welcome Muslim infiltrators in unlimited numbers, and accommodate such territorial claims as may be put forward by her neighbour in Assam in order to fulfil the dream of Greater Pakistan. But no right-minded Indian can agree to purchase Pakistan's friendship at such a high price.

Sheikh Abdullah's choice is clear. He cannot expect India to change her Kashmir policy since any change will mean a renewal of conflict. The Union Home Minister, Gulzarilal Nanda, has clinched the issue by declaring that Kashmir should "settle down in complete unity with the rest of the country. This is the only solution". It was the pride of the Sheikh's friends to claim that before his arrest he belonged to the galaxy of patriots like the Khan brothers of the North-West Frontier Province, Khan Samad Khan of Baluchistan and Maulana Azad. He won this distinction because of his firm faith in democracy and secularism. It was these qualities that brought him close to the late Prime Minister. Perhaps, his greatest tribute to the memory of Jawaharlal Nehru will be to resume his role as a crusader for tolerance, secularism and communal harmony. We may end this discussion with the great words: *Magna est veritas et prevalebit* (Truth is great; it will always prevail in the long run over ignorance, prejudice and error).

17. INDIA AND CHINA

PERHAPS, few events in recent years had caused greater distress and disappointment to the late Prime Minister than the rupture in the relations between India and China. His mortification was, however, largely the result of his own unrealistic reading of the Chinese history, especially of those chapters concerning that country's dealings with his own. In the belief that India and neighbouring China had not gone to war against one another for thousands of years, Nehru allowed himself to be led to the naïve conclusion that they would always remain ideal friends. Apart from the fact that the political relations between the two countries were neither continuous nor close for many centuries to warrant the claim of good neighbourliness by either, there was nothing special or distinctive in their relationship. If there had been no major conflicts between them in the past, similar claims can be made by India in the case of many other neighbours. *Chini Hindi bhai bhai* ("The Chinese and Indians are brothers, brothers") was, therefore, a slogan coined impulsively or invented to meet the exigencies of the present-day situation, with no basis in the sober facts of history.

Friendship with China is, however, worth striving for. Indeed, good neighbourliness and international amity are the cardinal tenets of *Panchsheela*, the Holy Writ of India's foreign policy. Whether China is near or far away, it is the path of prudence to study her carefully so that our dealings with her may rest, not on slogans and shibboleths, but on a comprehension of realities. A country as big as Europe and inhabited by more than 650 million intensely vital people, with a remarkable capacity for survival and proliferation, cannot be taken for granted.

Biologically and mentally, the Chinese are the most vital people in Asia. A noteworthy fact about them is that they have always been far too many. Learned men have estimated that the population of the Chinese states in 280 B.C. was around 14 million which increased to 28 million in A.D. 200. There were 41.5 million Chinese in A.D. 726. Their number rose to 89 mil-

lion in 1644. The year 1743 saw them 150 million strong, while in 1919 they increased to 330 million.¹ Their present numerical strength of over 650 million is expected to reach the formidable figure of 700 million before long. Writing about the Chinese under the present Communist dispensation, a knowledgeable author says: "Like the fine dust in the air, they were everywhere, anonymous particles of the Chinese quarter of mankind made to hurry history with their naked hands. One could learn little about their minds. One could observe a multitude of details, but the omnipresent living background, the people of China, remained elusively reduced to prototypes."²

Perhaps, it is on account of their excessive numbers and their continual exposure to hardship and suffering that the people of China have developed a strange insensibility to death. Throughout the Chinese history famine, pestilence and civil strife have swept away millions of lives without seriously affecting the majestic march of the country's venerable civilization. In the eighth century, the ambitions of a Tartar adventurer plunged China into the vale of tears, involving the lives of 36 million people. The convulsions provoked by the Taiping rebellion in the nineteenth century have been recorded as the most destructive period of warfare in human history. More than 30 million lives were lost in that domestic holocaust. The civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communists from 1928 to 1934 resulted in a prodigious expenditure of human blood. According to an observer, nearly 50 million people perished during the Kuomintang regime.

Floods and famines have been no less active in claiming Chinese lives. For twenty centuries, China has had an average of one famine a year, while the Hoang-ho continues to be the much-dreaded "river of sorrow". So, if Mao Tse-tung is not deterred by the threat of an atomic or nuclear war, it is not only because life in China persists, but also because it is cheap.

But, in spite of the fact that life in China has been, to borrow Hobbes' expressive phrase, "nasty, brutish and short", its people have nourished a magnificent civilization, for which mankind is deeply grateful to them. While the inhabitants of many

¹ *The Story of Civilization : Our Oriental Heritage*, Will Durant, Simon and Schuster, 1935, p. 769.

² *China and Her Shadow*, Tibor Mende, Thames and Hudson, 1960, pp. 25, 26.

that country are instructive. Speaking in the House of Commons in February 1933, he defended Japan's role in China in these words: "Japan has got a powerful case based upon fundamental realities. . . . When you look at the fact that Japan needs markets and that it is imperative for her, in the world in which she lives, that there should be some sort of peace and order, then who is there among us to cast the first stone and to say that Japan ought not to have acted with the object of creating peace and order in Manchuria and *defending herself against the continual aggression of vigorous Chinese nationalism? Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stand condemned if we condemn Japan.*"⁶ (Italics mine.)

The dissolution of the Manchu dynasty in February 1912 and the advent of Dr. Sun Yat-sen as the "father of the Chinese Republic" brought no relief to distracted China. His successor, Marshal Chiang Kai-shek was undoubtedly a much stronger man, but the Kuomintang regime under his leadership became a hot-bed of corruption, nepotism and oppression. A majority of the Chinese, including thoughtful people, welcomed the Communists. The poorer sections of the community in particular rejoiced that they would no longer be oppressed by the rapacious money-lenders and landlords. The Kuomintang, which began as a great democratic force, committed suicide. It was too weak and too selfish to undertake the monumental task of rejuvenating the broken Leviathan.

The establishment of Communist dominion over the mainland of China was announced on October 1, 1949. For the first time, the country passed under the control of rulers the like of whom it had never seen before in all its long history. In their intellectual abilities, they are as well-equipped as the mandarins, but their political and social convictions are wholly alien to the traditions of their land. They are shrewd and competent and are convinced adherents of Marxism, in the vindication of which they make little distinction between ends and means. They are superb planners and strategists who have mastered the difficult art of curbing imagination and sentiment with realism and of preferring deeds to words.

Their governing passion is to make China a giant among nations. Since the inauguration of the first plan, 1953-57 in-

⁶ *The Paths that Led to War*, John Macintosh, Blackie, 1940, p. 206.

volving an investment of 18 milliard dollars, the country has grown into a formidable industrial power. It is under a deep debt of gratitude to Soviet Russia for this achievement, but is chary of acknowledging it. In May 1953, two months after Stalin's death, Russia committed itself to supply ninety-one large industrial plants to its Asian ally. The discontinuance of Soviet assistance on such a scale from 1960 does not appear to have unduly discouraged the Chinese planners who have been prompt in rectifying the imbalance between industry and agriculture. Farm output has largely recovered from the natural disasters of 1959-61. It is, of course, impossible to accept Chinese statistics at their face value, but there is no doubt that under the new regime the country is moving much faster than most of the developing countries.

Perhaps, what is most important to India and to the rest of the world are the political convictions of the Chinese leaders. Mao Tse-tung is not a Confucian, but a lineal descendant of the German political thinkers, Hegel and Trietschke. He and his lieutenants are firm believers in what the Germans call *Machtstaat* or Power State. The Common Programme, drawn up by the Communist Party at its annual convention held in September 1949, categorically declared that the new regime "shall examine the treaties and agreements concluded between the Kuomintang and foreign governments, and shall recognise, abrogate, revise or renegotiate them according to their respective contents".⁷ In other words, the new regime would not endorse any engagement if it did not accord with its xenophobic nationalism. The declaration of September 1949 is indeed an affirmation of Communist China's approval of the imperialist ambitions of its former rulers. At one time or another, they claimed jurisdiction over Viet-nam, Korea, most of Central Asia, including the territories now regarded as Chinese, Nepal, and many South-East Asian countries.

The determination of the Chinese leaders to gain their end has been made abundantly clear in recent years. They are least concerned to prove the tenability of their claims. Hitler declared with perfect conviction that Czechoslovakia had "belonged to the *lebensraum* of the German people" for a millennium. He was equally convinced that "all the rubbish

⁷ *India and World Affairs*, K. P. Karunakaran, Oxford, 1958, pp. 67, 68.

of small States still existing in Europe must be liquidated as fast as possible".⁸ The aims of the Chinese dictator in Asia cannot be less ambitious than those of the dead German Führer in his continent. Mao is also a convinced believer in the supremacy of brute force. "War," declared Mussolini, "is to man as maternity is to woman." The Chinese dictator evidently shares this view, for she says that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun". In his view, the atom bomb is a mere paper tiger. "The outcome of a war," he holds, "is decided by the people, not by one or two new weapons." With unlimited cannon-fodder at his command, he demonstrated the plausibility of his dictum in the Korean War.

The tragic fate that has overtaken Tibet furnishes a conclusive proof that Communist China has in fact emerged as an imperialist Power. By no stretch of imagination can Tibet be called a province of China. With its wild immensity, its tremendous gorges, its desolate uplands, and its perpetually snow-crowned mountains, this remote region, almost the size of Europe, is like no other country in the world. Besides, in race, language and culture, the Tibetans have nothing in common with the Chinese. Tall, well-proportioned and graceful, they are by nature gentle and jovial and regard all forms of shooting as an unforgiveable blasphemy. It is this unoffending people who are in dire peril of extinction. It is true that since the early years of the eighteenth century, Tibet owed some form of allegiance to China, but at no time did it take Peking's orders in its domestic concerns. In fact, from 1912 to 1950, its sovereignty was untrammelled and the course of subsequent history would perhaps have been different if the British Indian Government had shown the elementary prudence of sponsoring Tibetan membership of the League of Nations. No canons of international law or of equity would have been offended had this been done, for the Tibetan revolt of 1913 had ensured that "there was no longer any Chinese authority at any point on the borders of India from Ladakh to Assam".⁹ The fact that Tibet was not so admitted to the comity of free nations gave the Communist Chinese regime a

⁸ *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Alan Bullock, A Pelican Book, 1962, pp. 485, 486, 703.

⁹ *Tibet: The International Aspect*, D. F. Hudson, in the book *Tibet Fights for Freedom* edited by Raja Hutheesing, Orient Longmans, 1960, p. 236.

plausible pretext to justify its aggression on the ground that the country had always belonged to the Chinese State.

The "liberation" of Tibet began on October 7, 1950, and from that day the story of that country has been one of blood and tears. A militarised State, with its imperialist goal well-defined, invaded a helpless country defended by a people who were total strangers to modern warfare. The Treaty of Peking, concluded between the two countries on May 23, 1951, was a mere make-believe. The internal autonomy of the country and the spiritual and temporal paramountcy of the Dalai Lama, guaranteed under the Treaty, were promptly reduced to a dead-letter. The new tyranny, threatening to destroy their very existence as a nation, roused even the mild-mannered Tibetans into a country-wide revolt. The fierce uprising at Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, on March 17, 1959, was suppressed with pitiless thoroughness. Even the Potala Palace, the Vatican of Tibet, was not spared from the ravages of war. The Chinese general, writes Lowell Thomas, achieved one purpose. "Lhasa was a city of the dead before he got through with it."¹⁰

The Dalai Lama, who was given asylum in India from Chinese terror, declared in his statement from Mussoorie on June 20, 1959, that the Treaty of 1951 was between two independent and sovereign States and that the subsequent behaviour of the Chinese was a flagrant act of aggression. He expressed his deep sorrow that his repeated attempts to "remove the bitter resentment felt by my people and to bring about a peaceful atmosphere in the country" were frustrated by the Chinese. While the "liberation" of Tibet has been completed with the exile of its deeply-venerated ruler, India has incurred the inveterate hatred and enmity of the Chinese Government for her temerity in giving asylum to the unfortunate young man. The Dalai Lama has aptly summed up the Sino-Tibetan relations thus: "China and Tibet are like fire and wood."

There is no evidence to show that India took a timely warning from the Tibetan crisis about the true nature of the Chinese rulers whose friendship she was so assiduously cultivating. The ties between India and Tibet are age-old and the fate and the future of the latter cannot at any time be a matter of indifference

¹⁰ *The Dalai Lama*, Lowell Thomas, Jr., Special Student Edition, Ballantine Books, 1961, p. 107.

to this country. The happenings in Tibet from 1950 had made it abundantly clear that China's intentions in that country were by no means pacific. India could not, of course, do much about it. Indeed, the protection of a weak and helpless people from an aggressive neighbour is the collective responsibility of civilized nations. But this country, which claimed intimate relations with Peking, could certainly have expressed its strong disapproval of China's high-handedness against the peace-loving Tibetans. Nothing of the kind was done. On the contrary, an Agreement was signed between India and China on April 29, 1954, which at once put this country in the position of a neutral in relation to Tibet. It was essentially a trade agreement and yet a preamble was interposed in the document, enunciating the much-publicised Five Principles or *Panchsheela*, the "cornerstone" of India's foreign policy. The very title of the Agreement makes depressing reading: "Agreement Between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between the *Tibetan Region of China* and India." The italics, which are mine, are significant.¹¹

Thus, as far back as 1954, India accepted in an unseasonable and impolitic document the historically untenable proposition that Tibet was no better than a "region of China". In 1958, she went a step further. In a Note sent by the Ministry of External Affairs to the Embassy of China in India on August 2, 1958, the Government of India recognised "that the Tibetan region is part of the People's Republic of China".¹² Having thus written off Tibet, India debarred herself from advocating Tibetan independence either with the Chinese or in the world organisation. Speaking in the Lok Sabha on March 30, 1959, when an inferno was raging in Tibet, the late Prime Minister declared: "We want to have friendly relations with the people of Tibet and we want them to progress in freedom. At the same time, it is important for us to have friendly relations with

¹¹ *Panchsheela* is not a revelation from the high and, as the late Prime Minister himself declared, there is nothing new about it. The Five Principles are: 1. mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; 2. mutual non-aggression; 3. mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; 4. equality and mutual benefit; and 5. peaceful co-existence.

¹² *White Paper*: Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged and Agreements signed between the Governments of India and China, 1954-59. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, p. 63.

the great country, China.”¹³ It is difficult to understand how a conquered people can ever “progress in freedom”.

Despite denials, India's attitude towards Communist China was strongly influenced by its growing military strength. As far back as on September 30, 1954, the late Prime Minister declared in the Parliament: “The fact is, and it is a major fact of the middle of the 20th century, that China has become a great power—united and strong.” The smiles, the interlocking of arms in comradeship, the embrace and the eulogy, so lavishly bestowed on the visiting Chinese dignitaries to New Delhi, left no discerning person in doubt that India was in fact determined to appease China. But her pliancy was of no avail, for at the slightest provocation on the Tibetan issue, China attacked this country in unmeasured language, driving its Prime Minister to despair.¹⁴ Disillusionment, however, came to him in full measure when his own country was attacked suddenly and with savage fury in September-October 1962.

The Sino-Indian dispute is not over minor adjustments of the frontier between the two countries, but over the accommodation of the Chinese claim to Indian territory measuring more than 40,000 square miles. One of the longest in the world, the Indo-Chinese border, 2,400 miles long, stretches in a wide arc from the trijunction of Afghanistan, China and India in the north to the trijunction of Burma, China and India in the east. It runs along the most rugged and awe-inspiring terrain comprising mighty mountain walls and watersheds rising to a height ranging from 14,000 to 25,000 feet. It is a cardinal principle of international law that a boundary like this, sanctified by custom, tradition and usage, and conforming to enduring natural features, cannot be made an issue in dispute. In addition, the Sino-Indian border has the sanction of specific treaties and engagements which are reinforced by the exercise of continuous administrative jurisdiction upto its limits by the Indian Government.

India has produced a mass of unimpeachable evidence to prove that the boundary line between the two countries, as it existed before the Chinese encroachments began, is valid both juridically and according to all canons of territorial demarcation. If China

¹³ *India's Foreign Policy*: Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru, The Publications Division, Government of India, 1961, p. 315.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Statement in the Lok Sabha on April 27, 1959, p. 321.

had any reservations on the issue, it was perfectly open to her to bring them to the notice of the Indian Government during the protracted negotiations that preceded the signing of the ill-starred April 1954 Agreement over Tibet. But she did not choose to do so then. In fact, the preamble to the Agreement categorically interdicts the kind of territorial demands which the Communist regime later sprang upon India and sought to enforce them at the point of the sword.

At any rate, it is idle at this distance of time for the Chinese to challenge the validity or the morality of the McMahon Line which defines the Sino-Indian boundary in the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and which has been in force since 1914. The Line was decided upon at a conference held at Simla between the representatives of the British Indian Government and of Tibet and China. The tripartite convention was initialled on July 3, 1914, and carried a map showing the frontiers of Tibet with Indian and Chinese territory. The boundary so marked between the Tibetan and Indian territory, from the trijunction of Bhutan, Tibet and India eastwards to the Burmese border, into Burma as far as the Isurazi Pass, has come to be known as the MacMahon Line. Approximately 850 miles in length, it has acquired that name after Sir Arthur Henry McMahon (1862-1949), who was at the time Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department. Apart from the fact that the Tibetan plenipotentiary endorsed the convention without any reservation, the Line has been willingly accepted by the Governments of free India and Burma. What is equally significant, after years of frontier disputes, Burma and China entered into a Treaty in October 1960 confirming the *de facto* frontier in that sector as defined by the McMahon Line.

And yet China has chosen to denounce the Line in relation to India. She condemns the demarcation as the handiwork of "British imperialism" and makes the amazing charge that the Line was drawn "surreptitiously".¹⁵ The Communist regime, whose irredentist motives are so obvious, has, however, chosen to forget its own record of aggression. As recently as 1949, it stripped Sinkiang of its autonomy despite the fact that the region is inhabited by an overwhelmingly non-Chinese population. Its record in Tibet will rank with some of the most unabashed

¹⁵ *White Paper No. IV*, Government of India Publication, p. 9.

aggressions in history. And yet it has chosen to adopt a wholly untenable attitude of self-righteousness. There is no substance in its complaint that Tibet was not free to participate in the Simla discussions. After it overthrew the nominal paramountcy of Peking in the national uprising of 1913, Tibet was as much entitled to become the arbiter of its own destiny as any other country. If this had not been so, the presence of its representative at the Simla conference would certainly not have been countenanced by the Chinese plenipotentiary. The agreement concluded by their Government with Nepal in 1856 in its own right supports the fact that the independent status of the Tibetans was real.¹⁶

It is true that the Chinese representative at the 1914 Conference raised certain issues, but they related to the boundary between Tibet and China and not to that between Tibet and India. It has, therefore, made no difference to the validity of the McMahon Line merely because the Simla convention was not accepted in its entirety by the then Chinese Government. Writing to Chou En-lai on September 26, 1959, Nehru clinched the issue thus: "You have yourself acknowledged the fact that no armed clash ever occurred along our border until the beginning of this year. All Chinese Governments have respected the Indian border. The fact that previous Chinese Governments were weak is no answer. Not even a protest was registered in accordance with established State practice in this regard, as was done in the case of Burma between 1906 and 1937."¹⁷ The Indian border with China in NEFA is, therefore, neither a sediment of history nor a "product of British policy of aggression", but one formed according to all approved procedures of territorial demarcation. It is idle for China to seek to push back or to obliterate the McMahon Line. It is not Britain alone that stands by it. The American Ambassador to India, Professor J. K. Galbraith, stated on October 27, 1962, that his Government recognised the Line as the international border in the NEFA area. China cannot ignore with impunity the significance of this recognition.

Similarly, the border between Ladakh in India and Tibet in the northern sector admits of neither doubt nor dispute. The

¹⁶ *White Paper No. II*, Indian Prime Minister's letter, dated September 26, 1959, to the Chinese Premier, p. 38.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 35.

boundary line is traditionally well known and is in conformity with the widely-accepted principles of geographical division. As far back as 1684, the Governments of the two States pledged themselves to maintain the inviolability of the frontier between their respective territories. The Treaty of 1842, to which the rulers of Kashmir and Tibet and the Emperor of China were a party, bound the three Powers to respect the centuries' old boundary between Ladakh and Tibet. There was a certain decisiveness in the language of the Treaty which affirmed that "there will never be on any account in future, till the world lasts, any deviation even by the hair's breadth and any breach in the alliance, friendship and unity" between the three countries. Their commitment relating to the frontier line was equally categorical. "We shall," they declared, "remain in possession of the limits of the boundaries of Ladakh and the neighbourhood subordinate to it, in accordance with the old custom, and there shall be no transgression and no interference (in the country) beyond the old established frontiers. We shall hold to our own respective frontiers."

Alexander Cunningham, who toured the region in 1846, declared eight years later that the eastern boundary of Ladakh "is well-defined by piles of stones, which were set up after the last expulsion of the Sokpo or Mongol hordes in A.D. 1687 when the Ladakhis received considerable assistance from Kashmir".¹⁸ The candid statement of a Chinese official in 1847 ought to put an end to all controversy on the issue. Writing to the British Indian Government, he said: "Respecting the frontiers, I beg to remark that the borders of those territories have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed, so that it will be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement and it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any additional measures for fixing them."¹⁹ It is true, as the Communist regime contends, that the Treaty of 1842 recorded no explanations or specifications relating to the frontier line, but this was due to the fact that the signatories were fully convinced about the futility of stressing the obvious. The frontiers were too well-known to require any formal delimitation.

Barahoti, in the district of Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh, is yet

¹⁸ *White Paper No. II*, quoted on page 36.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

another bone of contention between the two countries. During the discussions held in 1958, ample documentary evidence was furnished by India to show that this area, called Wu-Je by the Chinese, belonged to her. Nevertheless, in the interests of a peaceful settlement, she suggested that the two sides should suspend the exercise of their civilian jurisdiction in the disputed region till China could substantiate her claim to it. The offer was, however, rejected and when India resumed her civilian administration in the area, it was condemned as wanton trespass!

Thus, India's case concerning all the three sectors of the far-flung Sino-Indian frontier rests on sound principles and abundant historical evidence, which have won the approbation of many foreign experts. If, however, China is convinced that the Indian point of view is untenable and spurious, she has been urged by New Delhi to agree to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice at The Hague. But the Communist regime is loath to invite any such impartial verdict.

The fact is that China, which has neither evidence nor arguments to support her stand, believes in presenting India with a *fait accompli*. She is not prepared to accept any testimony that does not suit her foibles. Chinese cartography is notoriously unreliable²⁰ and it is the outmoded and extravagantly drawn maps that furnish the basis for her territorial claims. Till she launched an open aggression against India in September-October 1962, China cynically exploited the credulity and the anxiety of the Indian Government leaders to retain her friendship by biting off large chunks of Indian territory both openly and surreptitiously. There was great subtlety in her *modus operandi*. In personal discussions, her spokesmen pretended to show the utmost deference to Indian views and standpoint on the border issue. For instance, when Nehru visited China in October 1954, he was assured by the suave Chou En-lai that the old maps had been published as the Communist Government had no time to revise them. In the voluminous correspondence that passed between the two countries, we read Nehru repeatedly recalling the Chinese Premier's verbal assurance that he would recognise the McMahon Line as a valid boundary in the NEFA as he had done in the case of the Burmese border. But the letters

²⁰ *Tibetan Marches*, Andre Migot, pp. 97, 98. A distinguished French doctor practising in Indo-China, the author has great personal experience about China and Tibet.

and memoranda, addressed by the Chinese Government to India, presented an entirely different picture.

Border incidents, which began in 1954 and steadily grew in their frequency and seriousness in the subsequent years, afforded an excellent opportunity to the Chinese Government to put its strategy of caresses and kicks into practice. In the Ladakh region, it built a military road, one hundred miles across the Aksai Chin area, despite the fact that this had traditionally been Indian territory. The road connects north-western Tibet with Sinkiang and makes the reinforcement of the Chinese garrison in Tibet considerably easier than through the distant and more difficult road leading to Lhasa from Central China. It was not considered a crime to violate Indian sovereignty in order to gain the Chinese strategic ends. Nor were Indian susceptibilities regarded as of much importance when further encroachments took place both in that sector and elsewhere.

India's complaint against China is best summarised in Nehru's words: "You have referred to the maintenance of the long existing *status quo* on the border. The Government of India have always been in favour of it. It is the Chinese Government who have violated it repeatedly in recent years. I can refer, for example, to the construction of 100-mile road across what has traditionally been Indian territory in the Aksai Chin area, the entry of Chinese survey parties in the Lohit Frontier Division in 1957, the establishment of a camp at Spanggur in 1959, the despatch of armed personnel to Bara Hoti in 1958 and stationing them there in winter against customary practice and last, but not least, the use of force in Longju."²¹ Thus, the encroachments not only affected the entire Indo-Chinese border, but were also extremely serious.

The Indian Government, which had unwisely concealed these serious developments from its people in the futile hope that China would eventually agree to a peaceful settlement of the dispute, belatedly began to have second thoughts on the attitude of its "allies". Peking was, however, supremely unconcerned about the embarrassment of New Delhi. India's hopes of discovering a *modus vivendi* were shattered by the Note of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs of April 3, 1960. The Note

²¹ *White Paper No. II*, Nehru's letter to Chou En-lai, dated September 26, 1959, p. 35.

asserted that "the entire Sino-Indian boundary has never been formally delimited, and the areas now disputed by the two sides have always belonged to China, not to India".²² To substantiate this claim, the Chinese Government launched a full-scale military attack on India in September-October 1962 along the entire frontier.

The attack was premeditated and well-planned. The invaders enjoyed considerable natural advantage in the terrain on their side of the border. Both on the NEFA and the Ladakh front, they could gain access to the front-line with great ease and speed, while the terrain on Indian side presented a veritable logistical nightmare. In the Ladakh region, for instance, while the Chinese had only to walk to their advance posts from various strong and well-established bases behind them, the Indians were forced to maintain a perilous lifeline of nearly seven hundred miles from their nearest railhead, Pathankot. The position in the NEFA was no better. While the Chinese operated from a plateau, well-served with roads, the Indian troops on the front-line could be fed and reinforced mostly through air-lift.

The battle inoculation of the Chinese troops was perfect, since the invasion had been planned years in advance. Many divisions had been given intensive training in Himalayan warfare so that the arctic conditions obtaining on the battlefield did not materially affect the physical fitness of the Chinese soldiers. Besides, their equipment was modern and most effective. They were armed with automatic rifles and were liberally supplied with 120 mm. mortars that outranged Indian mortars so that their fire power was much superior to that of the defenders.

The Chinese intelligence service was superb and, what with excellent communications, the invaders were able to achieve remarkable co-ordination both within and between all the battle sectors. They were greatly assisted in securing precise information about the disposition of the Indian troops by "fifth columnists" in whom the Indian side abounded. Lastly, they gained all the advantages of a surprise attack on an enemy that was not only small in number and ill-equipped, but did not have the faintest notion about the magnitude of the build-up on the

²² *White Paper No. IV*, p. 15. Kingsley Martin writes: "China's historical claims were at best unsubstantiated and—this is the important point—never the sort of claims that are pressed by one friendly power upon another." (*New Statesman*, February 1, 1963, p. 149.)

other side. The Chinese rulers had taken the additional precaution of neutralising India's neighbours, Nepal, Burma and Pakistan, through border agreements in order to isolate this country both diplomatically and strategically.

The Chinese launched their attack on India in the NEFA area on September 9, 1962, and crossed the McMahon Line in force. The full weight of their armour was, however, felt from the 20th of the following month when the invasion assumed the magnitude of a full-scale war all along the frontier. Suffering from an inferiority in numbers, arms and equipment, the Indian troops fell back losing their frontier posts north of Tawang and then, on October 25, the important road-head of Tawang itself. Other Chinese attacks were launched at Kibitoo, fifteen miles from the Burmese border, and in two areas in the north and south of Ladakh in the western sector of the frontier. By the end of the month, the Indian troops, however, improved their tactical position considerably and were able to throw back repeated Chinese assaults on Walong at the eastern end of the McMahon Line. They fought with magnificent courage and tenacity on all fronts, proving their superiority to the enemy in pitched battles and in engagements where the opposing forces did not have excessive numerical superiority.

The stalemate on the battlefield ended in the second week of November when the invaders opened heavy attacks near Walong and Tawang at opposite ends of the McMahon Line. They captured Walong in the east and forced the defenders to retreat from the strategically important Se La ridge and by means of a carefully-planned out-flanking movement, captured the important administrative town of Bomdila in the west. They advanced forty miles beyond Bomdila to a point less than thirty miles from the Assam plains. The Se La-Bomdila action was undoubtedly a military debacle for India. The reverses in the Ladakh region were not so serious, despite the fact that the Indian troops there were merely engaged in policing the border and were neither equipped nor prepared to meet a strong, cunning and determined enemy. The Chinese, however, made a number of attacks in the vicinity of the Indian airstrip at Chusul in south-eastern Ladakh and captured many posts.

It is undeniable that China, which stopped the aggression on November 22, 1962, as abruptly as she had started it, gave India

a bloody nose. But Indian defeat and discomfiture were inevitable. As the distinguished Liberal leader, Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, observed, *Panchsheela* and the policy of non-alignment had served as an opiate to the directors of India's foreign policy who signally failed to fathom the depth and magnitude of Chinese perfidy. Again, the concept of non-violence, as preached by Mahatma Gandhi, was projected into State policy with no regard for its impact on the country's defence. The late Prime Minister's repeated statements that his own thinking and outlook and that of others like him were largely conditioned by Gandhian idealism hardly conduced to the nation's preparedness to meet possible aggressors.

It was inevitable that the idiosyncrasies of the Government leaders on war and peace and on India's relations with outside Powers were strongly reflected in their defence policy. It was indeed typical of Nehru's way of thinking that as recently as 1959 he spurned the suggestion for joint defence between India and Pakistan, asking rather rhetorically "defence against whom?" It is small wonder, therefore, that in its arms and equipment and in its military thinking, the Indian Army had become obsolete. Lulled into a false sense of security, the Government leaders gave no opportunity to the armed forces to master the strategy of mountain and jungle warfare. Their entire preparation consisted in countering any military adventurism from Pakistan. While making a cautious disclosure of the reasons for the reverses suffered by the Indian troops at NEFA, the new Defence Minister, Y. B. Chavan, stated in the Parliament in September 1963 that "our troops had no requisite knowledge of the Chinese tactics and ways of war, their weapons, equipment and capabilities".

No less serious was the tendency on the part of the Government leaders, who could by no stretch of imagination be regarded as military experts, to play politics with the defence services. Krishna Menon, Chavan's predecessor and the late Prime Minister's *alter ego*, especially on foreign affairs, is undoubtedly a versatile and outstanding man, but his likes and dislikes and his tantrums did no good either to his popularity or to his country's interests. His tenure as Defence Minister was indeed a national misfortune. "There is no doubt," writes Kingsley Martin, "that the army believes that it was not only out-

numbered and inadequately armed, but that India was out-generalled because its best fighting generals, with actual experience of warfare, had been put aside in favour of soldiers for whom Krishna Menon had an individual liking.”²³

General K. M. Cariappa, former Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, recalls that within a short period of ten years there have been four Chiefs of Staff and that the fifth one was appointed recently. He is grieved that some of the ablest Generals, with intimate knowledge of the operational areas, were allowed to retire, while inexperienced men were permitted to take their place. “I am afraid,” writes the General, “a certain amount of ‘politics’ was allowed to get into the Army which did a great deal of harm to the spirit of loyalty and discipline amongst some of the higher ranks with its resultant effect on the morale of the officers and jawans generally in the lower ranks. This should not have been allowed to happen at all.”²⁴ Menon was relieved of the Defence portfolio on November 7, 1962, and on the 14th his place was taken by Chavan after relinquishing the Chief Ministership of Maharashtra. Chavan may not have Menon’s scintillating brilliance, but he brings to his new task the solid virtues of a statesman who does not disdain to listen to wise counsel.

It is unnecessary to smother India’s armed forces with superlative praise. Their centuries’ old record, including their heroism and gallantry during the first and the second World War, amply bears testimony to their great fighting qualities. The reverses at NEFA have, therefore, brought them no dishonour. At any rate, only 24,000 troops were engaged in the defence of the far-flung frontier, while the number of the invaders was much larger. And yet the casualties inflicted on the Chinese

²³ *New Statesman*, November 30, 1962, p. 770. Menon’s remarks in London on September 18, 1962, when he was still the Defence Minister, are revealing. He said: “We are taking the necessary steps to deal with the situation. There is no crisis in the sense of panic. If it were that kind of situation, I would not be here now.” He was making this statement ten days after the Chinese troops had actually crossed the Indian boundary along the Himalayan watershed in the NEFA region! Nehru was equally ill-informed about what was happening in the northern frontiers. He said on October 12, 1962, barely eight days before the Chinese launched a mighty offensive, that instructions had been issued to the troops to throw the Chinese “out of our territory” in the NEFA area “although I cannot fix the date for that”. How simple!

²⁴ *Prerana*, a Bombay Journal, August-October 1963, pp. 99-101.

were heavy. The greatest need of India's defence services is, therefore, modern arms and equipment.

Among the Western democracies interested in India's future, the United States and Britain took the lead in hastening to her aid. The Indian request for small arms from Britain was met with remarkable expedition and the military hardware was on its way to this country within a few hours of the request. The first shipment of American military equipment to India was flown from the United States Army stocks in Western Europe on November 1, 1962.

Duncan Sandys, the British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, and Averell Harriman, the United States Assistant Secretary of State and President Kennedy's special envoy, arrived in India in November 1962 to study the situation arising out of the Chinese invasion and to take counsel with the Indian leaders for forging a permanent deterrent to a repetition of such aggression. High-level military missions from the two countries and their discussions with the Indian Defence Staff were of great help in determining the nature and the extent of the help required by this country. Following the discussions, it was agreed that first priority should be given to the re-equipment of those formations which had suffered severely in the fighting against the Chinese and to the provision of mountain warfare equipment for the other divisions deployed on the Indo-Chinese border.

On his return from India, Sandys told the House of Commons in December that the Indian Ministers and Service Chiefs "made it clear that they had no wish to ask for arms from abroad which could be produced in India and that they were already taking action to step up the output of their ordnance factories and to expand in other ways their manufacturing capacity". He also disclosed that he had Nehru's categorical assurance that the arms supplied to this country would be used exclusively to meet Chinese aggression so that Pakistan need have no apprehensions at all on account of the growing ability of its neighbour to defend herself. Other Commonwealth countries were prompt in offering generous assistance to India. The combined U.S., British and Indian air exercises held in this country in November 1963, have further strengthened the solidarity of the democratic countries. The Soviet Union's tacit endorsement of American aid

to India and the fulfilment of its own promise to send symbolic Migs to this country have deprived the Chinese of all worthwhile friends in the world.

For its successes on the Indian border, China is free to preen itself as the cock-of-the-walk in Asia, but its offer of November 21, 1962, to negotiate a peaceful settlement with India was rightly rejected by this country. The suggestion for the withdrawal of the troops of the two sides to positions 20 kilometres ($12\frac{1}{2}$ miles) behind the lines of actual control which existed between India and China on November 7, 1959, had all the characteristics of "heads we win, tails you lose"! Rejecting the Chinese offer, Nehru pointed out that the 1959 'line of actual control' was no line at all but "a series of positions of Chinese forces on Indian territory in Ladakh, progressively established since 1957, which forcibly and unilaterally altered the *status quo* of the boundary". He added: "To advance a few hundred kilometres and then offer to withdraw 20 kilometres is, as anybody can see, hardly a constructive proposal based on mutual accommodation."²⁵ If China was sincere about her peace offer, she should agree to the Indian forces going back to the various defence posts they had occupied in all the three sectors prior to September 8, 1962, when the Chinese aggression began. Peking flatly refused to do anything of the kind.

The proposals put forward by the six non-aligned countries that met in Colombo in December 1962 for ending the deadlock have so far borne no results. The proposals, published in January 1963, do not go into the merits of the dispute and are merely intended to pave the way for negotiations between the two countries. Briefly, they envisage the withdrawal of the Chinese troops in the western sector to a position 20 kilometres from the line of actual control between the two sides as on November 7, 1959. While in the middle sector the *status quo* should be maintained, Indian troops can move right up to the McMahon Line in NEFA, except for the two areas comprising the Thagla Ridge and Longju. This is not an ideal solution for India since it brings large territories in all the three sectors that had belonged to her before into discussion as to their future disposition. Nevertheless, she has accepted the Colombo Con-

²⁵ *White Paper No. VIII*, Nehru's letter dated November 14, 1962, to Chou En-lai, p. 12.

ference proposals in principle, but Chinese refusal to do so unreservedly as a basis for negotiations has rendered them ineffective.

Whether there will ever be a mutually acceptable settlement of the Indo-Chinese border dispute, it is impossible to say at the present moment, but there cannot be any doubt that the wound inflicted by China on India cannot be healed soon. Nor can this country again feel secure on its northern borders. With this grim reality facing her, India should subject her foreign policy to closer scrutiny. It is absurd to suggest that she should have anticipated the Chinese aggression and prepared herself militarily many years ago. Even today, when there is every need for strengthening her defence, Pakistan does not scruple to misrepresent her intentions. Had India armed herself vigorously earlier, Pakistan would certainly have raised a mightier hue and cry with much plausibility. Perhaps, it would also have caused alarm to this country's other neighbours. But, without sacrificing her allegiance to the gospel of non-alignment, India could by an imaginative deployment of diplomacy have given an unmistakable indication to China that she would not be alone if she was attacked. Western democracies rushed to her aid after the Chinese attack in 1962 without expecting any return from her. She could well have used the certainty of their support earlier in order to prevent aggression.

There is every need today for gaining a clear perception of the policy of non-alignment. India is a developing country and belongs to the group of poor cousins in the community of nations. It is mere wishful thinking to suppose that her attitude or pronouncements on world affairs can have a decisive influence on international events. Nehru, the sole architect and director of his country's foreign policy, did not himself believe that they had any such potency.²⁶ India's desire to remain uncommitted is perfectly valid because her formal adherence to either of the so-called power blocs cannot substantially add to their material resources or even to their striking power in these days of nuclear warfare. A poor country cannot be a great asset to its allies.

There is, therefore, nothing wrong with the policy of non-

²⁶ "Nobody can pretend that our influence is such as to mould world opinion or world actions." *India's Foreign Policy*, Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 73.

alignment so long as it is not treated as an immutable dogma or as an instrument for the formation of a new bloc, nursing suspicion and hatred against a vital section of humanity for past wrongs. The inaugural address of President Sukarno to the twenty-nine nations of Asia and Africa, which met at Bandung in April 1955, was an angry indictment of "white" imperialism. He invested the meeting with unique significance because "this is the first international conference of coloured peoples in the history of mankind!"²⁷ Surely, propagation of new racial intolerance cannot free Asia and Africa from poverty and suffering. Chou En-lai, described by Richard Wright as "a disciplined Communist of the classical, Bolshevik mould, a product of war and conspiracy and revolution", headed the Chinese delegation to the Bandung Conference. Addressing the assembled delegates, he said: "On the basis of the strict adherence to the five principles, now we are prepared to establish normal relations with all Asian and African countries, with all the countries in the world and first of all, with our neighbouring countries."²⁸

What is the precise value of these words and how can non-alignment bring immunity to a country from aggression? The estrangement between Malaya and Indonesia and the rivalry and enmity that dominate the relations between the Arab countries demonstrate beyond doubt that solidarity among the uncommitted nations is largely a myth. Similarly, it is difficult to assess the gains made at the Belgrade Conference. Marshal Tito's thesis that the future of mankind should not be allowed to lie in the hands of a few Powers²⁹ is perfectly valid, but neither he nor the dignitaries that had assembled in the capital of Yugoslavia in September 1961 could indicate how that goal could be realised. We may not entirely agree with F. S. Oliver, the historian, when he says: "Isolation is a bubble of a distorted imagination", but it is undeniable that a good deal of vague and pretentious moralising, reinforced by foggy clichés, is being freely indulged in in the name of non-alignment.

²⁷ *The Colour Curtain · A Report on the Bandung Conference*, Richard Wright, Dennis Dobson, 1955, p. 117.

²⁸ *Asia-Africa Speaks from Bandung*, Published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, 1955, p. 66.

²⁹ *The Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-aligned Countries*, Belgrade, September 1-6, 1961, p. 18.

And yet India need not abandon her favourite doctrine, nor need she abate her enthusiasm for a new world order. In her reckoning, all countries are her friends, but surely some among them are better friends. "All are equal, but some are more equal" is undoubtedly a solecism, but it will do this country much good to accept it as an ineluctable fact of life. She need not forswear any of her convictions for doing so. All she need do is to let the international affairs take their own course without her having to pronounce on them, since her opinions really count for nothing. She has already suffered much harm for not practising the virtue of reticence. "We have sought," said the late Prime Minister, "to avoid foreign entanglements by not joining one bloc or the other. The natural result has been that neither of these big blocs looks on us with favour. They think that we are undependable, because we cannot be made to vote this way or that way."³⁰

The feeling about the "undependability" of India arises, not from the fact that she is non-aligned, but from the nature of her utterances on international issues. In many Western countries, and more particularly in America, the impression has gained ground that India's neutrality is in fact "neutrality in favour of the Communists". Whether the charge is valid or not is irrelevant, but the fact that it is being made certainly does not conduce to the success of the country's foreign policy. The Anglo-French misadventure at the Suez Canal in 1956 provoked the indignation of the Indian Prime Minister beyond endurance and forced him to describe it as an "unabashed aggression and deception".³¹ He was certainly not happy about the Soviet intervention in Hungary and the frightfulness that accompanied it, but the language of protest on that occasion was different. Perhaps, the warmth of President Nasser's friendship for Nehru would not have diminished if the latter had been less forthright in his championship of the Egyptian cause. Similarly, India's views on President Kennedy's miscalculated moves in the Cuban episode need not have been expressed at all.³²

Some of the leading statesmen in America have found India's utterances on world affairs most trying. Dean Acheson wrote

³⁰ *India's Foreign Policy*, Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 536.

³² *Ibid.* Statement in the Rajya Sabha, April 20, 1961, p. 587

that Nehru and Krishna Menon had "unusual gifts" for causing annoyance to the Americans and yet he argued with deep conviction that this country must be given generous assistance for its economic regeneration.³³ Menon's sallies at the powerful Senator Knowland during the 1956 session of the United Nations were, to say the least, unfortunate.³⁴ Knowland, leader of the majority party in the U.S. Senate in 1952-54, was emphatically of the opinion that 'neutralist' nations like India did not "deserve the same military or economic aid" as the other allies of America did. Pakistan, the reasons for whose birth and the circumstances in which it came into existence were not highly appreciated in many democratic countries, has now acquired massive military strength largely on account of the unpredictability of India's foreign policy. According to an American journal, the former U.S. Vice-President, Richard Nixon, favoured "military aid to Pakistan as a counterforce to the confirmed neutralism of Jawaharlal Nehru's India".³⁵ These are grave facts and it is the duty of the Indian policy-makers to give serious thought to them.

In spite of the endorsement of the Government's foreign policy by the Parliament year after year and in spite of the claims that were made by the late Prime Minister and others on its behalf, it has yielded singularly few dividends. The fact that India's relations even with Nepal were not cordial till recently provide its own moral. A small country, with an area of 54,000 square miles and a population of ten million, this Himalayan Kingdom has everything in common with India. In race, religion, language, culture and traditions, there is no difference between the two at all. During the British Indian regime, Nepal functioned more like a protectorate than as a sovereign State, but in 1951 the Nehru Government helped it to take its place among the free nations of the world in its own right. The Indian Government's contribution to the termination of the long-established Rana regime, which had successfully reduced the King into a figure-head, was noteworthy. And yet King Mahendra chose to turn his back on a country, without which his kingdom can

³³ *Power and Diplomacy*, Dean Acheson, Harvard University Press, 1958, pp. 118-119.

³⁴ *The Diplomacy of India*, Ross N. Berkes and Mohinder S. Bedi, Stanford University Press, 1958, pp. 205-06.

³⁵ *India in World Affairs*, K. P. Karunakaran, p. 239.

never do, because he was deeply hurt at New Delhi's excessive anxiety for the survival of parliamentary democracy in his State. He did not like Nehru's open disapproval of his action in abolishing the democratic institutions in his State in 1960, nor could he understand the Indian Government's reluctance to restrain the Nepalese insurgents from making this country the base for their subversive activities.

A quiet and determined man, the King caused dismay to New Delhi by deciding to play the role of Himalayan Tito. He started "non-aligning" Nepal in all directions! He visited Pakistan and then went to China, where in October 1961, he signed a border agreement and arranged for the construction of a Chinese-aided road between Khatmandu, the capital of Nepal, and Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, although there appear to be no sound trade reasons for building it. In fact, a former Nepalese Government had rejected the project as uneconomic.³⁶ While bidding farewell to the Nepalese journalists who visited his country last year, Chou En-lai expressed the hope that Nepal would become a bridge between China and India. Whether King Mahendra would like his country to play any such role, it is entirely for him to decide. Nevertheless, it is a fact of considerable importance that, while the Chinese have always handled him with the utmost delicacy, India cannot make any such claim. In his famous farewell message, Sir Robert Peel declared that it was not a wise policy for one country to interfere with the institutions and measures of other countries "out of an abstract love for constitutional Government". He urged that the doctrine of non-intervention, upheld by Fox, Pitt, Grenville, Canning and Castlereagh, should be followed with fidelity by Britain. India's foreign policy in relation to Nepal would have been realistic if this sage counsel had been followed. Fortunately, the "triumphal" state visit of Dr. Radhakrishnan, the Indian President, to Nepal in November 1963 and his eloquent references to the historic ties between the two countries have vastly helped to improve the Indo-Nepalese relations.

The same lack of realism in diplomacy exposed India to widespread criticism on the issue of Goa. This enclave on Indian soil, acquired by the Portuguese in 1510, should have ceased to exist soon after the withdrawal of the British from this country.

³⁶ *The Times Review of Industry*, June 1962, p. 76.

The French wisely saw the writing on the wall and wound up their affairs in their Indian settlements betimes. But the Portuguese, under Salazar, were totally impervious to all considerations of justice and morality and decided to cling to their Indian "possessions" as long as they could. Far from compelling Lisbon to revise its reactionary and outmoded overseas policy, New Delhi gave sustenance to it by unnecessarily affirming its faith in the principles of non-violence. On the issue of Goa, the late Prime Minister declared that the Government of India had "no intention of adopting any policy or methods which depart from these principles, which are the foundations on which our very nationhood rests and which are the historic and unique legacy of Gandhiji and the pioneers of our freedom".³⁷

The Prime Minister thus committed himself irrevocably to a course of action, from which he could resile only at the risk of inviting obloquy on his devoted head. It was idle to expect that the Portuguese rulers, who have not scrupled to convert their colonies into concentration camps, would voluntarily retire from their Indian settlements out of admiration for this country's idealism. And when the Indian troops marched into Goa in December 1961, the world denounced, with considerable plausibility, New Delhi's action as wanton aggression. Even the *New Statesman*, which is a great friend of India, felt constrained to join the remainder of the British press "with profound sorrow" in deploring "Mr. Nehru's decision to settle by force of arms his dispute with the Portuguese administration of Goa".³⁸ The weekly recognised that the Portuguese, "covertly egged on by at least some of their Nato allies", had stubbornly refused to consider any peaceful settlement and still it felt called upon to attack the Indian action. This was because, after its tragic error in not striking when the iron was hot, the Indian Government belatedly moved into Goa by advancing reasons that did not carry much conviction to foreign observers.³⁹

³⁷ *India's Foreign Policy*, Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 109.

³⁸ *New Statesman*, December 22, 1961, p. 947.

³⁹ Goa is now under a democratic government, with its own representatives administering its affairs. In the first ever popular elections held in the former Portuguese colony in December 1963, the party crusading for Goa's merger with the neighbouring State of Maharashtra, secured a majority. A three-member Cabinet, headed by the leader of the majority party, was sworn in at Panjim on December 20. Speaking rather hastily and from a wrong platform, the late Prime Minister stated at Jaipur on December 14 that "Goa should continue to remain a separate entity for some time until

It is evident from this survey that there is every need for imparting coherence, consistency and dynamism to Indian diplomacy. The self-deception of the directors of this diplomacy, especially in their attitude to China, was complete. K. M. Panikkar, India's first ambassador to Communist China, wrote that, while Burma became nervous at the growth of the Chinese Leviathan, such apprehensions were generally absent in India.⁴⁰ The fact that expansionism is an article of faith with the rulers of that country is no longer in doubt. The existence of pro-Chinese Communist cells in India and in the neighbouring countries is of ominous import. The Government of General Ne Win, the strong man of Burma, is showing growing signs of weakness. In fact, it is so narrowly based that the slightest weakening may expose the country "to a take-over bid by the White Flag Communists, an armed dissident underground organization".⁴¹ The Burmese Communists are generally pro-Chinese.

India can ignore these developments only at her peril. The Chinese leaders, to quote Kingsley Martin, are an "able, unscrupulous and indoctrinated *élite*", who have established their absolute dominion over an industrious and obedient people. They have thus the great advantage of pursuing their goals, domestic and external, without obstruction or opposition. The existence of democracy in India makes any such unity of purpose and action, based on coercion, impossible. All these years, Nehru's personality had been a great unifying force in the country, but he is no more. A heavy responsibility, therefore, rests on the people and the Government of India to exercise great vigilance in guarding the integrity of their country.

The death of Jawaharlal Nehru on May 27, 1964, marks the end of an era in India. He was a much bigger man than a national leader. He was endowed with immense personal grace and vivacity, and the grandeur of his mind was matched by the

we finally decide the issue". Public opinion in Maharashtra was furious at this pronouncement. It was recalled that Maharashtra was compelled to make heavy sacrifices before its creation into a separate administrative unit. If necessary its people were prepared to go through a similar ordeal in order to secure Goa's accession to their State. Commenting on the Prime Minister's observations on the future of Goa, S. M. Joshi, Chairman of the Praja-Socialist Party, made the devastating remark that Nehru was a "prince of confusion".

⁴⁰ *In Two Chinas*, K. M. Panikkar, G. Allen and Unwin, 1955, p. 169.

⁴¹ *Burma To-day* by Seymour Topping, *The New York Times*, reproduced in *The Times of India* dated January 9, 1964.

majestic generosity of his nature. He believed in the essential oneness of mankind. Racial and religious antagonisms and political aggressions, besides repelling him, provoked his uncompromising antagonism. Gifted with a wide ranging mind and with a deep and natural comprehension of the hopes and aspirations of mankind, he pleaded with untiring energy and with a single-minded pertinacity for the banishment of war and violence from the affairs of men.

Nehru saw the immense power of science, its terrifying capacity to sweep away the landmarks of centuries as well as its measureless potentialities to promote the progress and happiness of man beyond his most sanguine expectations. He was, therefore, one of the foremost champions of a new world order, based on co-operation and friendship between nations, and never wavered in his belief that the goal he had set before himself was feasible. Wars, he was convinced, were not like nature's convulsions and could be avoided and outlawed for ever through human volition. It was this belief that impelled him to take such deep interest in world affairs and to make pronouncements on them so often. As we saw in the earlier pages, not all his utterances were welcomed by the Western democracies, but his seeming softness towards the Communist countries was certainly not an indication of his political faith.

Being a democrat and a firm believer in parliamentary institutions, Nehru was naturally at one with countries where this system flourished. And it was this fact of his affinity and kinship with them which he perhaps thought entitled him to be more plainspoken in pointing out their lapses than in exposing the shortcomings of other nations. Nothing is, therefore, more fantastic than the insinuation that this born democrat and this tireless champion of the liberty of man was a secret or open adherent of Communism. No creed or dogma could claim his allegiance if it offended against the dignity of man. Nehru's was indeed a world presence and mankind is the poorer without him.

To India, his death has meant the end of the Nehru Age. In simple truth, he embodied and expressed India. To the extent that a single person can ever be a nation, Nehru was India incarnate. He fought for his country's freedom with rare courage and determination, spurning the seductions of a cosy life, but

neither his suffering nor his sacrifices affected his innate nobility or the generosity of his mind. Although many unrepentant imperialists bore burning hatred for him, this peerless man nursed ill-will towards none. He was too noble and generous to descend to their level.

Nehru never forgot the true significance of national independence. He desired to redeem his people from a sapless life and to give a new meaning and purpose to it. He was admired and adored by his countrymen, not only as a lion-hearted champion of national freedom, but also as an incomparable leader of the disfranchised humanity. He was indeed the architect of India's economic plans and never wearied in communicating his enthusiasm for them to his people. The thought whether the plans were of tangible magnitudes never oppressed him because he was convinced that no price was too great to pay in combating the evil of poverty. It is small wonder that the passing of this great man was mourned by his countrymen and by others too with all the sincerity of personal bereavement.

India's indebtedness to Nehru is incalculable. After the partition, one could hear in the country the heart-beats of anarchy. His unique prestige and personality and his ceaseless labour in the cause of tolerance and sanity saved the land from chaos and ruin. He could achieve this remarkable result because he possessed in an abundant measure the quality to capture the minds and hearts of his countrymen and thus sway the course of history. It was as though there was nothing he could not accomplish. In spite of all the appurtenances of democracy with which it was equipped, the country had perhaps never seen a man more powerful than Nehru. There was no political prize that was beyond his reach. And yet he always remained a democrat, owing unswerving allegiance to the country's parliamentary institutions.

As a crusader for noble causes, Nehru was perhaps without a peer in the contemporary world. But, as has been shown in this book, he had no gift for administration. His impatient idealism did not help him to distinguish between the possible and the impossible. In his passion for quick results and hatred for sloth and inefficiency, he took upon himself an enormous load of cares and responsibilities and sustained them for seventeen long years with amazing agility, while men endowed with

less enduring minds and bodies would have been crushed under their weight within a much shorter period.

Inevitably, the country had to pay the price for this type of unique leadership. Despite the fact that it had a cabinet of ministers and a Parliament, the Prime Minister did not always consider it necessary to consult them before taking decisions even on the most vital issues. There was but one vote in the cabinet—Nehru's. He was a democrat to the core of his being, but at the same time there were occasions when he made no attempt to arrive at a real community of decision with his colleagues in the cabinet. In fact, few among them counted for much and none could forget that they owed their position entirely to the Prime Minister. The Parliament too had a similar experience so that, thanks to Nehru's omnipresence and omnipotence in Indian politics, the country's democratic institutions did not have a fair chance to function in the manner ordained by the constitution-makers. The personality of the late Prime Minister towered over them all.

Nehru was not merely the Prime Minister of India. He was his country's Foreign Minister, the head of the Planning Commission, the pivot of the party in power, and, in the eyes of most people, the mainstay of his nation's stability. It was because his responsibilities were so heavy and the calls upon his time and energy so exacting that on many occasions he was unable to give his undivided attention even to the most vital national issues. His inability to grasp the significance of the Chinese menace in time, the bungling over the Voice of America, the mishandling of the Kashmir, Goa and Nepal issues, and his hasty utterances on international affairs are some of the instances to show the inadequacies of his stewardship of the country as its Prime Minister.

It is unfortunate that this great man had not learnt the art of delegating power. Sri Prakasa, who had been his good friend since 1917, says this in the course of a moving tribute to his memory: "He (Nehru) had one serious failing—and that also shows him as intensely human. He would do everything himself. He did not know the art of entrusting work to others and to divide it among colleagues. Small things or big, he looked into all the details of anything he undertook, and ful-

filled his tasks without taking the assistance of anyone.”⁴² He added to these infirmities the doubts and hesitations that assail a man of extreme rectitude so that the Curzonian drive for quick and efficient despatch of official business was conspicuously absent under his premiership.

A vast and developing country like India is in desperate need of dynamic and purposeful guidance from a central authority untrammelled by any considerations other than those of achieving success. It is only then that the goals it has chosen to reach can be realised. Nehru did not always succeed in supplying this vigour to his Government so that, while we have had a surfeit of good intentions about the future of the country, the bulk of the people are still waging a desperate battle against want and hunger. It would be idle to pretend that Nehru remained effective till the end. While it would be most futile to discuss what would have happened to the country if he had laid down the burdens of office a good many years before his death, it is almost certain that he was by no means an apt student of Goethe. Says that great German: *In der Begrenzung Zeit sich der Meister*, that is, “genius is knowing where to stop”. This perhaps explains why Nehru died in harness. But whatever his faults, and it is absurd to ignore them, he was an incomparable leader. India and perhaps even the world may not be able to see the like of him for centuries to come. A deathless page of history, to borrow a Churchillian phrase, belongs to Jawaharlal Nehru.

There has been a remarkable smoothness in the transition from the Nehru Age to the era of the common man, thus falsifying the forecasts of the prophets of gloom, namely, that India would fall apart after the passing of that great man. The role played by Kamaraj, the Congress President, in ensuring the unanimous acceptance of Lal Bahadur Shastri by the party in power as Nehru’s successor will remain memorable in the history of this country. India was indeed most fortunate in having Kamaraj, a towering South Indian personality, at the helm of the Congress organisation at that critical time. Capable of

⁴² Jawaharlal Nehru : *The Man*, Sri Prakasa, *The Hindustan Times*, May 30, 1964.

Sphinx-like silence, sententious in speech, and quick and fearless in action, he has become a vital source of strength to the Congress, thus revealing that after Nehru there are still reserves of leadership in the country. The fact that he, a South Indian, has so rapidly acquired a pivotal position in the national affairs is not a small gain to the cause of the country's solidarity.

Lal Bahadur Shastri, the new Prime Minister, is not an untried leader. A diminutive figure, modest in demeanour, humble in spirit, self-effacing and far above unworthy ambition, he has all the characteristics of a common man endowed with uncommon wisdom. His upbringing and environment have taught him to approach the poor with the mind of the poor. These are no small assets to any successor of Nehru. Under the new dispensation, both the Union Ministry and the Parliament will have ample opportunities to vindicate their pre-eminent position in the affairs of the country. In his broadcast message to the nation on June 11, 1964, the new Prime Minister declared that "of all the problems facing us, none is more distressing than that of the dire poverty in which tens of millions of our countrymen continue to live. How I wish that I would be able to lighten the burden of our people". Much more than Shastri's leadership is involved in ensuring that his "wish" becomes a reality within a reasonable period. If the Congress Government alone cannot deliver the goods, there should be no hesitation in broadbasing the Central and State Ministries by inviting talented men from other parties to join them. The stars in their courses have no mercy for excuses.

In the domain of foreign policy, Nehru's death does not warrant any radical change in it. Non-alignment is not a negative attitude, but India's way of life and her political institutions have helped to forge special links between her and the Western democracies which it is neither possible nor wise for her to ignore. During the Indian President's visit to Britain in June 1963, Queen Elizabeth spoke eloquently about the "very special relationship" that existed between the two countries. In spite of its peculiarities, that relationship was marked by "genuine personal friendship and affection". It is because India is bound to countries like Britain and America by common ideals and

convictions that they rushed to her aid in the hour of her dire need. They are willing and indeed anxious to help her to become a strong and prosperous nation, capable of functioning as the bastion of democracy in Asia. It is only by becoming a Great Power that India can check the rampant imperialism of China and give hope and courage to the countries of Asia and Africa in accepting the challenge of Communism.

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